The Dissertation (or Treatise) Committee for Jennifer Marie Powers Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation (or treatise):

Re-Appropriating the Catholic Imaginary: Discourse Strategies and the Struggle for Modernization in Late Nineteenth-Century Religious Fiction

Committee:

Katherine M. Arens, Co-Supervisor

James M. Boyden, Co-Supervisor

Madeline C. Sutherland-Meier

Judith G. Coffin

Orlando R. Kelm

Sandra B. Straubhaar

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by

Jennifer Marie Powers, B.A., M.A.

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Dedication

To my family

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Re-Appropriating the Catholic Imaginary:
Discourse Strategies and the Struggle for Modernization
in Late Nineteenth-Century Religious Fiction

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Jennifer Marie Powers, Ph.D.
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This project explores how literary authors used religious discourses in the socio-intellectual climates of late nineteenth-century Catholic cultures. It takes its premise from a tacit paradox of Western European modernization: unlike other Western European nations, nations such as France and Spain modernized without adopting Protestantism or doctrines of anti-Catholicism or anticlericalism--and, thus, without a strict break into national secular discourses.

Addressing how various religious discourses were used in modernizing France and Spain (respectively, from 1848 and from 1868 to the early twentieth century), I take a cultural-historical approach to representative religiously themed novels and short fiction of the periods. I contend that non-institutionalized traditional Catholic culture (a culture's "religious imaginary" or "Catholic imaginary") offered authors a plural and, thus, strategic source for making cultural critiques. These critiques would have resonated widely with contemporaneous readerships, and often without overt confrontations (as

anticlericalism has historically done). I point to the presence of such critiques specifically in canonical authors' religious works--works often considered to be aberrational or "too Catholic" to be valued as modern vis-à-vis the landmarks of Western literature.

Taking as my key example a novel by the "father of the modern Spanish novel," Benito Pérez Galdós's Misericordia or Compassion (1897), I unfold progressive readings of this text based on discourses borrowing historical, thematic, and stylistic elements from the archives of a Catholic imaginary. Thereafter, I broaden my argument by considering how comparable, but distinct, discourses inform social-critical readings of Victor Hugo's Les Misérables or The Underclass (1862), Gustave Flaubert's "Un Coeur simple" or "A Simple Heart" (1877), and Emilia Pardo Bazán's "Un destripador de antaño" or "The Heart Lover" (1900).

Overall, the project challenges a critical status quo that has chosen to identify canonical literature in reference to a secular aesthetic program, without allowing for the possibility that cultural-religious discourses might also carry weight for cultures that were modernizing. Additionally, it re-characterizes the modernizing intellectual, seen typically as spiritually cynical or atheist, as one acknowledging the populist force of the religious imaginary freed from church limits.

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Introduction:

Re-Reading Nineteenth-Century "Religious Literature"

In this project, I propose and exemplify strategies for re-reading a nineteenth-century Western European body of literature that literary scholarship has conventionally labeled "religious" or "spiritual" in inspiration. Any attempt by critics to designate a group of texts as representing a particular intellectual thread can, of course, be fairly problematic. To categorize this literature as such may constitute an attempt to set it apart from the culture at large. And, in practice, these labels have most often been used to identify it as socially or intellectually conservative, because of its explicit adherence to religious culture. What such judgments occlude, however, is that texts that seem religious or spiritual on their surface often come from the mainstream of their cultures, resting on widespread popular knowledge, rather than on official institutions. They can, moreover, represent issues in language and images drawn from particular religions, yet not necessarily in harmony with the orthodoxies of those religions. And, as I will suggest, in the Catholic cultures of Europe (and probably in many other religious cultures with which literature is associated), the signs and language of religion might also be used to argue for either conservatism or modernization, often with little reference to official religious organizations, to atheism, or to schism.

In particular, a category like "religious literature," established by literary critics, tends to separate out religion from the larger mix of authentic period phenomena, which

authors might typically have at their disposal. Yet what qualifies it as part of religious culture is a broad and changing landscape--encompassing language, practices, history, institutions, intellectual traditions, and many other facts. Even in a Catholic country--one whose official religion might be Catholicism--or in a "Christian era," official religion exists within a web of religious history, that is, competing religions (various Catholic and Christian denominations and their orthodoxies), socio-political practices, and knowledge associated with them (loosely or tightly). In turn, text traditions produced within the religious sphere (in its various historical permutations) have ranged from ideological tracts to secular-humanistic tales and atheistic refutations.[1] The literary and cultural critics of the twentieth century, moreover, favored modernism and liberal or progressive intellectual politics, which they rarely identified with religious culture. Particularly in their discussions of Europe's nineteenth century, they identified the new and modern with Realism and Naturalism, rather than most forms of religious expression--no matter how closely associated with the cultural histories with which they dealt.

In consequence of this pervasive bias, one of the larger goals of this project is to treat the religious literature of the nineteenth century in terms of the themes and rhetorics available in the period, not as an isolated or aestheticized category redefined by later critics. For nineteenth-century Europe, religion was still an active force in many lives (culturally, as well as in terms of confessional belief), and so it is straightforward and "realistic" to treat it as such, as one of the resources available for cultural production in the era. Writers had the history, resources, and expressive capacities of their cultures'

[1] To clarify a possible confusion: "religious literature" most broadly refers here to any categories of texts with religious content; "religious fiction" is one subset of that literature, as is "religious devotional literature." The general approach to religious literature should apply with variations to texts from many religious contexts. I use "Catholic literature" to refer specifically to Europe's Catholic countries. I will also switch between the terms "religious imaginary" and "Catholic imaginary" to refer to the contexts under discussion, as I define below.

religions available to them as they sought to engage their audiences. And these audiences were themselves engaged variously with religion--as believers, unbelievers, students in religious-run school systems, or residents of neighborhoods centered around the buildings and institutions of religious communities (whether or not they were members).

Overall, this project argues that twenty-first century critics need to take up religious cultures as they move into cultural studies. Using a limited number of literary masterpieces from two major Catholic cultures of nineteenth-century Europe--Spain and France--as case studies, I will outline certain reading strategies that can lead to correcting critical lacunae of the past, that is, showing how attention to specific aspects of religious (in this case, Catholic) culture can recover aspects of texts all too often overlooked. More specifically, I hope to reclaim examples of how authors can deploy religious materials in the broad span of cultural engagement and cultural politics, not just at conservative moments. In other words, I will suggest how authors who take up such material can construct arguments that influence their readers, using what is called "cultural capital"[2] or a resource derived from long traditions of religious experience in the service of their own causes.

When speaking more specifically of Catholic cultures, the term Catholic imaginary has come into vogue among critics today.[3] It addresses this domain of

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[2] The term is associated with French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, especially in his Language and Symbolic Power, trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Polity / Basil Blackwell, 1991 [1982 in French]).

[3] The term "Catholic imaginary" appears, for example, in Ross Labrie's study The Catholic Imagination in American Landscape (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 1997) and in Mary R. Reichardt's selection of scholarly essays Encyclopedia of Catholic Literature (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004). In Labrie, it refers to sets of religious thematics common among Catholic American writers of pre-Vatican II (after which, the critic notes, the national church became increasingly fragmented). He defines that commonality, namely, as the challenge by Catholic social theory and liberal democracy of a leftist church to more conservative models, although still taking the church--and not the individual--as authoritarian in the relationship between God and humanity. In Reichardt, the term serves as the organizing cultural principle behind a broader classification of literature as "Catholic." While neither based on the author's biography, nor on genre (e.g., novels, mystical works, or works of spiritual instruction), nor on agenda (i.e., orthodox vs. critical view), nor even on the most superficial religious content; "Catholic literature" for this critic encompasses a world view or perspective "informed in a substantial and meaningful way by the structures,

experience shared by writers and their possible publics in Catholic cultures, particularly to address cultural products termed "religious"--whether associated with official religion, or not. Parallel coinages might recommend themselves for other countries, regions, or communities heavily conditioned by a dominant and / or official religion or religious. I believe it is indeed useful in contexts where the Catholic church[4] is dominant. Yet, at the same time, such a term still tends to isolate a set of discourse practices, themes, and ideas from the works' social and historical contexts. Even critics sympathetic to the Catholic imaginary may relate these works principally to domains of religious expression--while regarding them, moreover, as literary relics. Despite such shortcomings, the idea of a Catholic imaginary still remains useful to my research--specifying a locus that is strongly determined by Catholic literacy, thematics, and practices, but not set apart from the culture at large.

My project thus issues not just a general call for re-readings of works from religious contexts (although the types of readings I suggest might well offer spurs to critics dealing with many different eras and kinds of religious cultures), but specifically of nineteenth-century European Realist and Naturalist literature determined by that Catholic imaginary. I hope particularly to recover and evaluate certain works' expressions of social critique as reflecting their authors' appeals for modernization of

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traditions, history, spirituality, and / or culture of Catholicism" (xvii). Among the thematic traits that she assigns to this rubric--God's immanence in the world, the noble end of human life and human free will, exile from modern society, incarnationalism (Christ becoming human, suffering a physical death on the Cross), optimism and hope--in some instances she cross references with Labrie. Reichardt further considers that Catholic literature may explore and challenge these themes without necessarily embracing them wholeheartedly, that is, in order to question them or take the side of the devil's advocate. Neither critic explores, however, as I will in this project, how a national literature typically seen as less challenging to the status quo, or less progressive, applies this national religious culture in a covertly dissenting thematics.

[4] N.B., I use "church" without capitalization to refer to the Catholic institution. Elsewhere, I will use "Church" with capitalization to refer to a cultural group of Catholic people. This distinction by form will be continued throughout this project.

politics or social policy--where too many critics consider them to attest their authors' turning back to more conservative points of view.

The works that I have chosen as my principal case studies are the following: Benito Perez Galdós's Misericordia or Compassion (1897), Victor Hugo's Les Misérables or The Underclass (1862), Gustave Flaubert's, "Un Coeur simple" or "A Simple Heart" (1877), and Emilia Pardo Bazán's "Un destripador de antaño" or "The Heart Lover" (1900). All of these works are situated in the latter nineteenth century's European Catholic cultures or when these cultures were moving towards modernization and secularization--after the fall of Europe's monarchies (1848 for France, 1868 for Spain) and after the church's loss of its Papal States in Italy's unification (1869-70). As the Catholic church made this transition, it saw a need to attract a growing bourgeoisie, which left it vulnerable to subsequent criticisms that it had changed its mission in Europe. These criticisms, I claim, emerge in the novels that I treat as expressed in rhetorics of loyal oppositions.

In crafting their works, as I will demonstrate, these authors make sly adjustments to traditional religious rhetoric and themes, taking them out of church control to suit purposes not necessarily condoned by contemporaneous church policy. Instead, they sought in-roads into the hearts and minds of their devout and lay publics, to instill a mindset of national growth and reform. However, they did so only within certain bounds, so that they would not necessarily be perceived as heretical or atheist. That is, they hoped to persuade their reading publics rather than to offend them. What risks they took, what dialogues they engaged in, and what cultural innuendos they made would vary with the site of Catholicism at which the authors met their audiences. However, that the Catholic materials could be used for critique outside the church was never in doubt for any of them.

I believe that such authors knew that the Catholic imaginary of their time in particular offered rich reservoirs of shared knowledge and experience. In consequence, they could expect their readers to become engaged in texts that used these materials in specific ways: (1) iconographically, reading clear references to the non-verbal and non-written symbolical language of the Church (colors, rituals, spaces); (2) politically, focusing on theological debates and Church history, particularly on contemporaneous popularized polemics coming down from Rome; and (3) "figurally" or analogically, taking up narrative representations of familiar scripts for salvation, penance, and conversion, as known from biographies of revered saints' lives or established strategies for identifying miracles and other religious experiences. A good Catholic reader of the time, as a practiced reader of such signs and symbols, would initially approach these representations as their churches and schools had taught them to, but then be guided through them by their authors to unexpected ends. Even a reader who lived within such a Catholic culture--but not as a believer--might still have been expected to engage with much of this material, given that Catholicism permeated daily life widely as a social presence. When authors co-opted such traditional materials, then, they were taking up both commonplaces of experience and official orthodoxies of a national readership. In their strongest appeals, made at moments of heightened social pressures, they may have edged on irreverence, but rarely seemed to cross the line to blasphemy. When not openly rebellious, such appeals may have been more effective overall for a public needing to modernize, yet not willing to discard the past completely.[5]

[5] It should be noted that the original methodology that I outline above is separate and distinct from what is expounded in Henri de Lubac's Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture, trans. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998 [1959 in French]), particularly vol. 1. Most significantly, the one consists of stores of Catholic culture applied in both writing and reading in popular contexts. The other is a largely scholarly method of orthodox medieval biblical interpretation classified as four types of readings ("literal" or with a basic historical perspective, "typological" or assuming a connectivity of Old and New Testaments, "tropological" or moral, and "anagogical" or spiritual / mystical).

As I re-read these purportedly religious or Catholic works to reclaim them from critics who have addressed them principally in aesthetic terms, they need no longer seem automatically politically conservative; nor do they seem to be simplistic morality fables, aesthetic relics, or museum pieces of defunct conservative cultures, as is often intimated. Rather, they align with the kind of progressive secular literature more heavily favored by twentieth-century literary critics. In short, they may be approached as vital statements to audiences immersed in Catholic culture.

Considering these works as more integrally a part of their original contexts (rather than in terms preferred by later critics) should, I believe, rectify today's assessments about the kinds of texts that represent national cultures. A case may be made for including the texts that I re-read here as virtually unacknowledged masterpieces of the Catholic imaginary, texts which re-use or co-opt Catholic culture and which show the realities of their period to readers possibly outside the artistic elite. What twentieth-century scholarship has thus traditionally seen as an intellectual backwater--appealing to the common and more conservative reader--may here emerge as fostering political critique or social modernization in new ways.

Project Structure and Chapter Sequence

My major case study in this project will address a masterpiece of religious fiction from Spain, Galdós's Misericordia (1897). This work, not the most favored of the author's work, emerged for me as particularly dependent on the Catholic imaginary of its age, and so provided material for three different readings, each based on a different kind of Catholic-cultural archive. Each reading will be presented in its own chapter because each requires extended explications of historical, political, or cultural facts that were likely commonplace at the time, but which have been lost to scholarship today. In

consequence, each will also provide the context of how twentieth-century critics have addressed the aspect of the text that is the chapter focus. Galdós proves himself a master in the use of the Catholic imaginary. He exerts compellingly subtle socio-political cultural critiques in his very conscious use of various forms of what may be qualified as secular-religious discourses--traditional cultural-religious rhetorics now turned to new social purposes.

The first chapter reinterprets Misericordia's Almudena, one of Galdós's supposed fictional enigmas, using the resources of Catholic iconography. The name "Almudena" opens the interpretation because it points to Madrid's patron saint, one of the many "advocations" or particularized versions of the Virgin Mary, that is, "Our Lady of the Almudena" (e.g., another being Mexico's "Our Lady of Guadalupe"). This advocation is to have purportedly aided early Madrid Christians in throwing off their Moorish occupants during the Spanish Reconquest--a set of references that Galdós weaves through his novel.

In the second chapter, I take up Misericordia's Benina, turning to a popularized theological polemic of the time to make my textual argument. "Benigna de Casia," as is her full Christian name, is a figure that I will show as designed to play with notions of sainthood. Namely, she reflects the historical "St. Rita of Cascia," who devouts affectionately entitle "Saint of the Impossible," but in more specific and contemporaneous ways than critics have previous considered (note in this context the orthographic differences in Casia, for the Galdós character, and Cascia, for the historical saint, which I have retained). As this saint, That is, Benina performs her miracles, becomes the patron saint of the practical, while at the same time calling prevalent socio-political assumptions into question. Here Galdós clearly references the concurrent canonization of St. Rita to pose the question of what social miracles really might be.

Closely tied to the preceding analysis, the third chapter will add another level to the reading of Benina as her story intersects with that of the novel's Don Romualdo. In referring to a figural or anagogical resource of a lesser-hailed medieval patron saint, Romuald, I believe Galdós is making a more scholarly, rarified cross-reference about the miracle or manifestation of Benina's abstract Christian charity or good. A Catholic reader more familiar with Church history will find here a reference to the life of an itinerant and reformist saint who is also a church reformer--a case for change and social progress.

Subsequent to these three readings of Galdós's Misericordia, a fourth chapter will turn to other prose works from Catholic Europe to make the case overall that Misericordia is not an anomaly, but paradigmatic of a Realist literature that happens to draw from the Catholic imaginary of nineteenth-century Europe. This chapter will thus briefly take up scenes from a sample of canonical works (mentioned above) largely misunderstood by Western literary critics in their representations of religion: Hugo's Les Misérables or The Underclass (1862), Flaubert's "Un Coeur simple" or "A Simple Heart" (1877), and Pardo Bazán's "Un destripador de antaño" or "The Heart Lover" (1900). It will demonstrate that these works also take up materials from their respective Catholic imaginaries to engage their audiences with stories told in voices often alien to use today--but clearly recoverable with the kind of critical scholarly engagement that I outline here. It will further suggest that it is possible to recover other similar Realist or Naturalist works from countries with clear religious contexts, especially in the work of authors after 1848 who have largely been assumed to be functioning in an increasingly secular world[6] and not known to be themselves religious.

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[6] In Priests, Prelates, and People: A History of European Catholicism Since 1750 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett conclude that Catholic observance (as most Western religious observance) has been on the decline overall but that the location of regions of observance and influence (N.B., Spain and northern France) have remained relatively stable. Of these Catholic regions or societies, France has secularized more than most (322-23).

For all the cases that I argue, it is critical to remember that, especially in the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church in Europe played a prominent role in current affairs, as its more conservative movement of "Ultramontanism" attempted to increase the doctrinal authority of the pope. Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) declared what is known as the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (1954) or the teaching that the Virgin was born immaculate and free from original sin. And, in 1870, he called Vatican I together, the church's first ecumenical council since the mid-sixteenth century--where bishops would formally assert the primacy and infallibility of the pope, enabling him to speak definitively on faith and morals.[7] Further, as the monarchies of France and Spain were transformed in the century between Napoleon and the First World War, this increasingly centralized Catholic Church would, well into the twentieth century, repeatedly figure into national discussions about education, the "essence" of these nations, the question of an international religious institution intervening in national political evolution. etc. Thus, for example, France would abrogate the traditional Concordat in a law separating church and state (1905), while Adolf Hitler's infamous Concordat with the Vatican involved the

[7] Under Pius, the church would continue to grow toward the political right in his issued Syllabus Errorum (1864), condemning various modern ideologies and trends (e.g., pantheism, socialism, civil marriage, secular education, and religious indifferentism). Under Leo XIII (1878-1903), the church would take a more conflicted road, appearing at certain moments more conservative and at others more liberal. For example, Leo would be uncompromisingly centralist in his attitude toward the unification of Italy and papal independence (relations with Italy only regularized after 1929) yet at the same time would support French Catholic democracy. Further, He would condemn American pluralism and American-Catholic religious liberty. Yet, in his encyclical Libertas (1888), he would seek to affirm political liberalism, democracy, and freedom of conscience and, in Rerum novarum (1891), adhere to social justice and encourage concrete social action among Roman Catholics (as in Christian social movements). My sources for this information are "Roman Catholic Church," The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions, 2000, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press. University of Texas Libraries, 18 July 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu> and J. Bryan Hehir, "Roman Catholic Church," The Oxford Companion to the Politics of the World, 2001, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press. University of Texas Libraries, 18 July 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>.

removal of "national" bishops to the Vatican's control.[8] Later, Spain's Second Republic (1931-39) would still be concerned with convents and the Jesuit order, while Francisco Franco (r. 1939-1975) still looked to this church to infuse among a majority population of Catholics a sense of national identity, opposed to liberal ideology and individualism.[9]

Considering all case studies within this history will allow me to argue, in a brief conclusion, for the necessary recapture of the function of religious imaginaries in literature, It is critical, I believe, in this era of cultural studies, to recoup this history for literary studies, for the Realist and Naturalist literatures of the late nineteenth century--but also of other times, for other eras, and with other religious orthodoxies in mind. A large body of authors, much larger than I represent here, may well have consciously situated themselves within cultural and political spheres but drawing from resources of religious imaginaries still powerful for their readers, but not necessarily in vogue for the literary avant-garde. To set up this argument, I will in the remaining sections of this introduction provide critical and theoretical material.

First, I will sketch typical twentieth-century approaches to religious literature, in order to argue how traditional scholarship have undervalued the strength and legibility of the statements of cultural critique contained in such Realist and Naturalist European literature. Subsequently, I will suggest and delineate certain strategies of reading, in this case, the archive of Catholic Europe that will be so critical to the chapters that follow.

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[8] A contested version of this history is found in John Cornwell's Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII (New York: Viking, 1999), which argues for the Vatican's engagement in politics in the era.

[9] For the basic and general histories of Spain and France as nations attempting to modernize in the shadow and tradition of their Catholic church, I have found the following references useful: Stefan Berger's edited compilation A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Europe, 1789-1914 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006) and Atkin and Tallett's Priests, Prelates, and People. For the subtleties of these histories, see further Jonathan Sperber's The European Revolutions, 1848-1851 (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge UP, 1994), Owen Chadwick's The Popes and European Revolution (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), Christopher M. Clark and Wolfram Kaiser's Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge UP, 2003), William J. Callahan's The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875-1998 (Washington, DC: Catholic U of America P, 2000), and Caroline Ford's Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993).

Through this exposition, I will argue that it is necessary for today's scholars and critics to trace texts' iconographical and theological-historical contents and relate them to their immediate and historical contexts. Moreover, it is important that they remain aware of Catholic strategies of story-telling, especially in establishing figural or analogical correspondences to current events (e.g., using, saints' lives or Bible stories as material for political content). Finally, I will briefly set up specific literary contexts that are relevant to the main chapters that follow.

A New Precedent for an Old Critical Trend

Nobel Laureate poet and essayist Octavio Paz, in his Sor Juana, or The Traps of Faith (orig. pub. 1983),[10] provides a good starting point for the set of issues that I address.

As Mexico's most renowned colonial Baroque poet, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, has typically been understood by twentieth-century critics as having transcended time and circumstance. She was a Catholic nun who wrote and published on intellectual--and not always religious--topics, producing art that speaks across the ages. At the end of her life, her renouncement of the scholar's life she led and retreat behind convent walls has been taken as a spiritual move, a final turn toward the church and mystical fulfillment.

In his unprecedented study of the figure, Paz suggests that Sor Juana's move to return to God at the end of her life was a likely concession to her need for finding socio-political asylum or self-preservation, heralding as he does so the twilight of such traditional assumptions about art as autonomous. He reminds his reader of the socio-political tensions arising in New Spain's climate of the Catholic orthodoxy imposed by Spanish imperialism (notably, the Inquisition). He then and provides a likely historical

[10] Octavio Paz, Sor Juana or, The Traps of Faith, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1988).

context, that is, the wake of a 1692 Indian riot, that might well have compelled a less-than-orthodox nun and writer to have looked to her Jesuit confessor for protection and defense. In this light, the nun's confessional writings would need to be examined as laying apart from the day's devout formulae and treated rather as potentially deliberate or even strategic manipulations of the Church's official positions of the day.

Paz argues more generally that ideological differences may indeed emerge in various uses of such traditional materials, and that uncovering how they worked might redefine what constitutes national cultural modernity in culturally religious countries:

> Evolution toward modernity divides into two parallel paths: that of countries in which modernity followed the triumph of the Reformation and that of countries such as France, which entered modernity without Protestantism. . . . The origins of English and North American democracy, deeply influenced by the Dutch example, were religious: Anglo-Saxon democracies were born of a religious movement, the Reformation. This is the decisive but never mentioned difference between Anglo-Saxon and Latin democracies; they spring from diametrically opposed attitudes toward the traditional religion of the West. (Paz 26-27)

Here the author's contention is precisely that critics have commonly defined the path to national modernity as deriving from criticism of the Catholic church (both the clergy and the institution) or from Protestant dissent. Yet nations with more extended traditions of Catholicism have taken different paths, with productive critique stemming even from within Catholicism itself. He further finds such dissent without a break in the church in France's "nebulous deism" or in Spain's continuing ties of the church to political power (30).

In the terms that I use here, texts that emerge from a culture with a pronounced "religious imaginary" (Catholic or otherwise) can use these shared materials for either orthodox or critical purposes. In many religious cultures, they are generally available to all (or at least to a very precisely defined set of) cultural productions, as in works of art. Even in the twentieth century, it would still be possible for a German-speaking Prague

Jewish author, Franz Werfel, for example, to write a novel about "Our Lady of Lourdes" (The Song of Bernadette, 1942), adapted into a major Hollywood film in 1943), using Catholic materials in circulation in the general culture to make a potentially larger comment on the Second World War. The texts that I address generally work more critically, as Paz assumed Sor Juana does. And they have been chosen specifically to counter assumptions that Catholic-themed works were necessarily conservative and to exemplify how the Catholic imaginary might be accounted for as a powerful narrative rhetoric and means of making a more subtle social critique.

Typically, modern Anglo-Saxon literary scholars and critics have generally resisted taking religious literature as seriously as Paz did. For example, I. C. Keller's Literature and Religion (1956) and Jacques Ehrmann's critical anthology Literature and Revolution (1967)[11] are examples (but on opposite sides of the same coin) of how this literature is taken by many critics to be conservative. Keller's work is typical in linking the church to a community's way of life, particularly its value system. He focuses not on church institutions, but on ethics and stresses how lessons in moral values are provided by the Bible and other religiously themed literature of canonical writers (e.g., the work of literary great William Shakespeare and that of nineteenth-century American poet James Russell Lowell). Keller offers some rather conservative and socially insular commentaries, simplifying Hamlet, for instance, as a depiction of the sin of procrastination (16-17). Ehrmann, for his part, will argue that modern literature took shape as the anti-religious body of work produced after 1789 or when God's sovereignty or Providence would come to be challenged by the will of human beings (e.g., in the

[11] I. C. Keller, Literature and Religion (Rindge, NH: Richard R. Smith, 1956) and Jacques Ehrmann, ed., Literature and Revolution (Boston: Beacon, 1970). As indicated by its title, Ehrmann's study is informed by Russian Marxist Leon Trotsky's classic work of literary criticism Literature and Revolution (1924), in which he identifies the revolutionary forces that shaped Russia's literary culture and consciousness. This reference, however, also represents a co-optation.

sacrilegious work of Spanish politician and writer Juan Donoso Cortés). Where Keller characterizes religious literature as the more or less tame instrument or expression of church dogma, Ehrmann defines it as distinctly anti-modern.

The eminent Yale Critic (and eventual deconstructionist) J. Hillis Miller, in "Literature and Religion" (1967),[12] does critique these positions. Miller identifies how such scholars have tended to evaluate religious thematics according to personal religious bent, that is, as either over- or under-playing their significance. More importantly, he critiques the ideological divide in modern scholarship, as it tends to adopt either a historicist view of the universe as godless or beyond the control of human beings or a nihilist one that rejects moral or religious values. By contrast, Miller takes an approach that is broadly religious, as it redefines religion as a trans-historical cultural force.[13] In doing so, he implicates scholarship in having distorted the intrinsic meaning or critical evaluation of past works with religious subject matter, especially in evaluating their modernity.

Decades later, the bias toward religious literature will still be in play, namely, in standard works such as Theodore P. Fraser's critical survey The Modern Catholic Novel in Europe (1994).[14] The critic notably labels his subject as "modern." But, even as he does so, he relegates the Catholic novel to an anti-modern niche in the history of nineteenth-century French literature. While concluding that earlier works of the century tend to be dominated by an explicit relationship for or against theology (e.g., Chateaubriand's The Genius of Christianity, with its secular impulse), the critic

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[12] J. Hillis Miller, "Literature and Religion," Relations of Literary Study: Essays on Interdisciplinary Contributions, ed. James Ernest Thorpe (New York: MLA, 1967) 111-26.

[13] Miller's work may be considered religious "in the sense of preaching any doctrinal position but of accepting theological questions as the most basic and important ones that can be asked" (Grant Webster, "J. Hillis Miller," Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 67: Modern American Critics since 1955).

[14] Theodore P. Fraser, The Modern Catholic Novel in Europe (New York: Twayne, 1994).

characterizes modernist works as those that grapple with the loss of orthodox faith (e.g., Charles Baudelaire's or Joris-Karl Huysmans's aesthetic of "art for art's sake" on one side, and Evelyn Waugh's contesting such aesthetics to present a more God-centered narrative on the other). Such novelists, he claims, existed in exile from the modern world, that is, from the Enlightenment or reason and rationalism, from the political legacy of the French Revolution or the theories and ideologies of nineteenth-century liberalism, and from positivism or the notion of progress (Fraser xvii). This scholarship too retains a rather limited and conservative perspective on cultural-religious material.

As this brief sketch implies, literary scholarship from the mid- to late-twentieth century has often tended to privilege a very secular critique as the essence of modernity, including ideologies of agnosticism, atheism, socialism, or Marxism. At the same time, Christian social movements or even more radical movements such as liberation theology[15] have been marginalized. That is, if literary works are identifiable with Modernism, atheism, and a break with tradition, they are typically taken as largely secular in content. If they rely too heavily on the Catholic imaginary, they are often dismissed as "too Catholic" for modern critiques and tastes.

For example, a work such as Hugo's Les Misérables (1862) is virtually always considered to be modern largely because of its secular rhetoric, as a reflection of the

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[15] This latter movement constitutes a theologically based one originating in the 1960s Latin American Catholic church (and influencing other movements such as Black, Palestinian, and feminist theologies). In this context, theology itself becomes politicized or as a tool for critiquing oppression of the poor (e.g., the Gospels are read as Christ's confrontation with social injustice). And the mission of the church, thus, becomes more practical, or with a concrete "praxis," in supporting the liberation of the poor through social, political, and cultural reform. For this explanation, I rely on "Liberation Theology." A Dictionary of Contemporary World History, 2008, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press. University of Texas Libraries,18 July 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>; "Liberation Theology," The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2006, Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 18 July 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu> and F. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Liberation Theology," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries. 18 July 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

author's deism or critical secularism. In contrast, works such as Flaubert's "Un Coeur Simple" (1877), Galdós's Misericordia (1897), or even Miguel de Unamuno's San Manuel Bueno, mártir (1933), are often read as potentially more conservative and reactionary largely because of their over religious overtones. But it is critical in the context of today's cultural studies, I believe, to distinguish an author's program (conservative, progressive, any other) from the tools available in the cultural imaginary that are available to engage readerships with that program. In making this distinction, it will be possible to recuperate the potentially great number of literary works that have otherwise been misread because their intellectual contexts have over time been distorted.

Let me now outline in the following section a set of reading strategies that might be profitably employed when dealing with the Catholic cultures of modern (post-Reformation, or at least post-1789) Europe, in order to recapture the rhetorical potential within the Catholic imaginary of any particular group. My goal here is to widen my optic beyond the critique of church institutions that has been common since the Reformation and which accelerated in the nineteenth century by separating out church from culture, dogma from individual religious experience, and short-term ideological imperatives from longer-standing traditions. A term like "secularized religious discourse" (which I will unpack below) is, in this sense, necessary to make these distinctions as part and parcel of the ever-changing differences between religious influence--through local culture, tradition, and experience--and religious dogmatism or orthodoxy--more commonly associated with organized forms of religion and their social and political fiats.

The "Catholic Imaginary" as Strategic Rhetorical Device

While not the hermeneutics authorized within a church context, the reading strategies that I propose here correspond more closely with what locals would know

within a culture conditioned by or with a religious tradition. My examples will suggest how a scholar or critic might approach texts related to European Catholicism, long claimed as a cultural dominant in Europe or at least able to claim an enduring physical presence on that continent.

Many of the same types of rhetorical resources may be found in other religious imaginaries. And so I claim what I outline below as answering to the type of problems discussed in Michel de Certeau's The Mystic Fable (1992), which takes up the case of how a particular social group (rural minor aristocracy) manifests its stress under a forced change of identity (in varying which psalms are appealed to, and in which ways). The author further argues for a shared cultural literacy (in this case, a set of favored religious texts that many members of the community know) and for a profound shift in story-telling about the materials in these texts.

In the case that I make for Catholic Europe, three large archives of such shared materials seem to be available to authors in the modern era. They provide, in my assessment, the material for specific rhetorical gestures (interpretations, storytelling, allusions, and other communications) within a group. They can vary locally in detail, but these archives encompass the long history of Catholic tradition--their local Catholic imaginaries--within which members of Catholic communities form their local identities.

The first of these archives within the Catholic imaginary constitutes a set of icons or iconic figures widely familiar within the cultural site. Here, an adherent of the faith will find meaning in those particular names, colors, numbers, etc., appearing in every church and practically on every street corner in Europe. French Catholics, for example, would recognize St. Denis, the first Bishop of Paris, as the patron saint of their country

and his church as the traditional site for the coronations of French kings.[16] They would also be aware that none of the patrons who spoke to Joan of Arc, that is, Sts. Margaret of Antioch, Catherine of Alexandria, and Michael, the Archangel, were held to be patrons of the ruling English crown of the time (a detail that would automatically cast the future French saint's project in a more political and nationalistic light). More concretely, a good Catholic--or maybe even the reader of a local periodical in a Catholic country--would recognize that the dedication of a church, in one instance, to St. Thomas Aquinas and, in another, to St. Charles Borromeo (both learned saints of noble birth) would infer different commitments to public values--in the former, poverty and learning and in the latter, dutiful spiritual leadership.[17]

Beyond the names of saints, simple signs such as colors and numbers carry semantic weight that figures as part of an iconographic rhetoric deeply woven into Catholic culture. Throughout the Catholic liturgical year, for example, each day may be marked by the appearance of a different color in the vestments for services. For example, white, red, green, violet, black, rose, and gold all implicate the spectrum of emotions tied to the life of Christ, the Christian Savior. White is to remind an adherent of innocence or glory, red of passion or martyrdom, green of hope, violet of penance or humility, black of sorrow or mourning, and both rose and gold of joy.

As far as meaningful numbers are concerned, three, four, twelve, fourteen, and forty all make immediate reference to common beliefs or even well-known figures. That

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[16] To gain a sense here of what a Catholic might commonly know about this saint and others mentioned in this section, I have consulted the online Patron Saints Index (http://saints.sqpn.com/), amassed using a wealth of popular sources by Catholic enthusiast Terry H. Jones. Other similar resources presenting material closer to Catholic orthodoxy are New Advent (http://www.newadvent.org/) and its digitalized early twentieth-century edition of The Catholic Encyclopedia (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/index.html).

[17] In another example, that same church dedicated to St. Sebastian, Roman martyr, or to St. Andrew, the apostle, follower of John the Baptist and martyr, would infer service and sacrifice for the faith, although with the former in the sense of a conversion and affirmation and with the latter of missionary work.

is, three will recall the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity); four both the cardinal virtues (justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance); and the number of evangelists or authors associated with the Gospels of the New Testament; twelve the number of Christ's original followers or apostles; fourteen the number of God's Holy Helpers or those saints said to obtain special favors in time of sickness (e.g., France's St. Denis). And, perhaps the most common number, as it resonates through both Old and New Testaments, forty, marks the length of Noah's flood and the time that Semitic prophets Moses and Elijah and the Savior Christ spent fasting (and in this sense, also the traditional duration of fasting in the season of Lent).[18]

In an author's hand, such iconographic references are easily woven into art and literary texts, where they can shade the meaning of an episode or representation by their very appearance in a scene or by being affixed to the sketch of a particular character. The attributes of saints and of the liturgical year, then, become effective indirect means of communicating with specific readerships.

The second large archive of knowledge and designation present in the Catholic imaginaries of Europe can also straightforwardly be used to shade or reinforce overt communications, but in references to what might be called "church news," That is, it encompasses contemporaneous church discussions and debates on doctrine and truths that were discussed from pulpits and often in the press itself. Given the close historical alignment in many Catholic countries between the religious and civil orders, doctrinal changes also implied or even exerted influence, both inside the church and on socio-political levels. In this light, seemingly insular church polemics can often be retrieved as cultural forces. For example, discussions of the Eucharist or the receiving of Communion

[18] I will take up textual inferences for the Lent and their implications in Galdós's Misericordia in my chapter "Almudena as Catholic Patron of a Syncretic Spain."

(a sacrament recalling Christ's sacrifice for his people), or debates about the Immaculate Conception (the belief in Mary's sanctity and preservation from original sin) were very much public news in the period. Both issues would come to speak, albeit in different ways, to the intelligentsia of the church and to the period's (Catholic) readers more generally, as the church used theological principles to fuel popular revivals.

The celebration of the Eucharist, for instance, was hotly contested at the time as static or moored in old theological agendas that did not speak to the day's Catholics.[19] Tradition had required adherents to prepare to receive the Eucharist by achieving a state of relative purity, by confessing sins and fasting until the sacramental meal. Practically speaking, however, these requirements often ended in discouraging participation in the sacrament. Not until Pope Pius X (1903-1914) would tradition and principle bend to the demands of practical abilities. This pope would call for the Catholic laity--children among them--to participate in the Eucharist daily and would make this practice more possible by relaxing requirements. Now, before receiving the sacrament, worshippers would need only to be free from the state of mortal sin and to have the good intention of doing what God may will--they did not need to fast or consult a priest individually.[20] This modification would later become part of a larger "Liturgical Movement" that would revolutionize Catholic liturgy or worship, essentially by recreating it in congregational ways or as a popular and communal rite.

The theology surrounding the Immaculate Conception had even broader implications, in a nineteenth-century focus on Mariology, which explicated Mary in the

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[19] For the issues surrounding the Eucharistic celebration, I rely on Owen Chadwick's A History of the Popes, 1830-1914 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 361-64. A cultural criticism on this point of theology will become apparent in Flaubert's "Un Coeur simple" or "A Simple Heart," which I will take up in a later chapter.

[20] Later, along the lines of this end, Pius would also begin to advocate that the mass, traditionally given in Latin, be translated in the vernacular.

role of spiritual mother of God and as mysteriously linked to the redemptive work of Christ.[21] The nineteenth century would bring a new platform to the campaign for Mary's sanctity under the guise of "Mary of the Miraculous Medal." This new image of Mary would be revealed in 1830 as a vision to the French Catherine Labouré (later canonized). Mary would appear to the girl accompanied by the epithet "conceived without sin" and make direct request that the vision itself be reproduced and distributed in the form of a medal or medallion (through which remarkable favors were also to be attained). Many miracles were attributed to showing reverence to Mary's pure birth at this point, making theology into a socio-cultural phenomenon lying outside any formal religious truth. Only in 1854 would Pope Pius IX officially adopt this belief as church dogma.[22] Links between theological debates and repercussions in the social sphere were thus easily available to novelists of the era.

Finally, the third major archive of Catholic Europe's knowledge comprises a set of stories or narratives drawn from the Bible or more popular sources and used as models for devout lives. Catholicism recommends to its believers not only to follow the life of Christ, the Savior, but also the examples of the mere mortals or saints who lived (and sometimes died, as martyrs) by His example.[23] Among those figures most worthy of

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[21] E. R. Carroll and F. M. Jelly, "Mariology," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale. University of Texas Libraries, 10 June 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; E. D. O'Connor, "Immaculate Conception," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 10 June 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

[22] Even in recent centuries church influence has effectively been felt outside its doctrinal sphere, as it continues to confront liberal policies on reproductive issues. Since Pope Benedict urged Italians to refrain from adopting a re-liberalizing referendum in 2005, Italy retains Europe's strictest fertility laws, forbidding the freezing and screening of embryos. And, most contemporarily, at the Pope's urging for a moratorium on abortion, both Italy and Spain have renewed anti-abortionist political strong-arming (e.g., Spain's socialist government strategically dropping abortion from its recent campaign platform and Italy's most recent elections claiming abortion as the major issue).

[23] Focusing on the cultural phenomenon of the saints, Kathy Bacon argues in her Negotiating Sainthood: Distinction, "Cursilería," and Saintliness in Spanish Novels (London: Legenda, 2007) that constructions of saintliness operate as means of dialoguing between traditional and modernizing contexts, namely, in terms of gender and identity construction. For this critic, that is, the narrative reference to a saint would not

imitation, St. Augustine is revered as the prototypical pilgrim and convert to the faith and St. Francis of Assisi is the prototypical ascetic and the first to bear the "stigmata" or the markings of Christ on the cross.[24] While not usually found in scripture, these stories circulate widely among Catholics, often in volumes of saints' lives[25] or in saints calendars, and as days of celebration (in lieu of birthdays) for individuals named after particular saints. As common or household knowledge bases, saints' lives function in Catholic culture much as today's "life scripts": believers will identify with acts and behaviors related in their content and use them guide decisions.

For Catholics, the application of these stories as life scripts arises most fundamentally in the coincidence of a given name with the name of a saint (e.g., Katherine with a particular St. C / Katherine or Jennifer / Genevieve with St. Genevieve) or of a birth date with a saint's feast day (e.g., March 17th as the feast day of St. Patrick). While not to be taken as prophetic, the details in these portraits may point a believer toward an individual path or vocation and provide tailored guidance as how best to travel that path or arrive at that vocation. Thus, a "Katherine" taken to be the namesake of St. Catherine of Alexandria might look for the learned saint's protection to achieve success in higher education or as a scholar or teacher (especially in the sciences) but also would contemplate bearing physical trials with patience (i.e., St. Catherine accepted martyrdom for her converting Roman subjects to Christianity). A namesake of St. Genevieve might

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necessarily imply an ideological adoption of the status quo but, rather, a potential negotiation or critique, most specifically, of the traditional and repressive Spanish social pressure of "cursilería" (associated with pretension, flawed imitation, inadequacy, failure to live up to aspirations, inadequacy and insufficiency). What Bacon does not address, which I do otherwise in this project, is the appeal of these texts to socio-historical modernity and by narrative strategies other than saints lives.

[24] Reichardt xvii; Kenneth L. Woodward, Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't, and Why (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1990) 70-73.

[25] These types of saints' lives and legends may be found, for example, in Alban Butler's classic collection, with the updates and additions of subsequent scholars (1756-1956): Alban Butler, Herbert Thurston, and Donald Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints (Allen, Texas: Christian Classics, 1996). I will further take up the cultural significance of this work in my chapter "St. Romuald, The Reformist Disguise of Benina and the 'Good Child.'"

be inspired to follow the example of the Parisian shepherdess who dedicated herself to causes, namely, the defense or protection of kith and kin and homeland (i.e., when Paris was besieged by the Franks, St. Genevieve encouraged military defense, organized prayers, and led an expedition for food). And any good Catholic sharing a name or a calendar day with St. Patrick may otherwise set confidently to large tasks (since, after all, this is the saint who converted all of Ireland, making it a safe haven for monasteries that would became great repositories of learning in medieval Europe).

The particularities of these lives and the custom of applying them to one's self would in literary contexts present an efficient means by which an author may speak in allusion or through allegory to a readership. That author would need only to recall a subtle detail of a particular saint's story that a readership would know (even as well as their own lives in certain instances) to create a more meaningful portrait or plot, but without belaboring cultural background in the narrative itself.

With a traditional repertoire of such ideological diversity and relative tolerance, any more progressive authors or novelists of the period would have found some distinct advantages in choosing traditional and familiar rhetorics over anti-Catholicism or anticlericalism, but also potentially more alienation in a less conservative time. Not only would the language of and the allusions to the faith already be familiar to readers but, moreover, the inherent contradictions between formal church and popular culture would create a kind natural semantic shelter, namely, for critiquing the institutional church from within its own affiliate and wide cultural tradition.[26] Reading church icons or symbols, alluding to church history and politics, and recognizing the power of holy stories as

[26] I will demonstrate the strategy that I mention here more clearly and in some depth in subsequent chapters. Particularly, see my chapter "Almudena as Catholic Patron for a Syncretic Spain."

familiar life scripts gave authors in Catholic countries a kind of cultural shorthand through which they could tell or elaborate on their own narratives.

As all eras of Catholicism would theoretically share at least subsets (if not the more complete set) of these archives of cultural meaning, their very existence requires special attention from and diligence by today's scholars and critics. These archives are not necessarily still visible today, nor are they still viable strategies of speaking. Texts based on them can call on extremely localized allusions or situations. Further, it is too easy to level such references to the status of ordinary aesthetic figures, rather than to see them in their more extended forms or contexts (see my next section "Toward a New Realist Reading of Misericordia"). "Historical approaches" (even "new historical approaches") do not always consider Church history as history. Yet decoding such lost layers of reference is both possible and necessary.

Dedicated Catholic signs and symbols straightforwardly emerge as signifiers with the socio-political climate of a shared Catholic imaginary, and with more nuance than is often recaptured in readings focused on aesthetics (e.g., all martyrs are not Christ, no matter that most of the saints and martyrs refer to His suffering in their own reflections of it).[27] The art of recovering such texts where the Catholic cultural history has been forgotten or ignored is, then, researching and re-applying the specificity of any text's location within a national or regional Catholic imaginary--so that the icons, symbols, and signs will be once again understood semantically. Once the signifier is specified in its context, the discrete cultural implications surrounding that signifier must be explicated or unpacked; and the narrative appearance of said signifier (e.g., coincidences within the plot, interaction with other potential signifiers, etc.) now re-read from the perspective or

[27] For an example of foundational criticism of this persuasion, see Frank P. Bowman's "On the Definition of Jesus in Modern Fiction," The Christ Figure in the Novels of Pérez Galdós, ed. R. Cardona and A. N. Zahareas (New York: Las Américas, 1967).

through the lens of a contemporaneous and more initiated readership. Beyond that, of course, individual authors may move into episodes layered or more densely coded for specialized publics, beyond the general public who goes to church or reads the Bible or is aware of Catholic polemics of the day (itself, of course, not a universal public).

In a real sense, I am describing an amplification of New Criticism's close readings, but not one focused on aesthetics or eternal values alone. Instead, I want to assert that texts from religious cultures require close readings staged in light of those cultures' sites and of basic principles of rhetoric--accounting for senders (artists, authors) and receivers (readers) sharing a wealth of knowledge through particular signs and distinctively formed acts of communication. To assert that a readership, both believing and non-believing, might well be aware of its city's or its nation's Catholic patron saint is a fair assumption--given potential daily contact with Catholic personal and place names (e.g., hospitals are often named after saints), public processions and festivals, and memorial sites and sculptures in common view. Galdós himself attests to this fact in his Misericordia in depicting a not-so-devout crowd of beggars that nevertheless recognizes the correspondence of Benina's name "de Casia" with St. Rita's "de Cascia."

Moreover, to claim a broad awareness of particular moments in the political engagements of the church within Catholic countries is also as fair an assumption--given that having this knowledge base takes for granted only closer engagement with news sources (just as that of saint's lives does so with the specific site of religion). Again, in the case of Galdós (and likely with other authors of the period), his national audience was one of avid consumers of short fiction and current events, and there is no reason to assume then that this knowledge would have escaped them, particularly urban dwellers.

As an author of a Catholic country thus can assume that many of his contemporaneous readers will have a religious imaginary in common, so too can a critic

assume that such an author's textual allusions (more or less overtly religious) will be consciously and deliberately packed with meaning--even critical insinuation. An author may begin, for example, with the color black, March 17th, or specific creatures or animals (e.g., the grouping of angel, lion, ox, and eagle). But these references in their surrounding contexts may be understood and taken as common allusions, respectively, to church mourning and of priests' cassocks (in some denominations), to St. Patrick's day, or to the four the Evangelists (who often appear with the heads of or as accompanied by these creatures or animals, each one specifically assigned). Varying these references, in turn, allows that author to provide commentary--but without confrontation--as Paz asserted for Sor Juana. A French readership of the Napoleonic era will understand how rare it was, before 1789, to have a bishop who was not also noble (or one who did not behave like an aristocrat). And, should one appear in a story, that might signal that story as critical or counter-factual--as Realist, or Naturalist, or utopian, as it were. If that reader also recalls that Napoleon I manipulated and re-organized the church's higher offices and created a new priesthood, hierarchizing them under his office and thus as subservient to his designs for modernizing France, then yet another dimension of meaning can be recovered from the text. If a contemporaneous reader or later scholar sees only a "bishop" as a church authority, then the reading produced may be too simple or flat--and the text may be robbed of its claim to tangibility, nuance, or, moreover, depth of political or ethical scrutiny.

A Model: Benito Pérez Galdós's <u>Misericordia</u>

The three archives commonly available to modern Catholic cultures that I have adduced in the prior section are, to be sure, not the only ones available to the Catholic imaginaries of nineteenth century Europe. They are, however, prominent ones that critics

can seek out in texts. To argue their value as such more profoundly, the chapters that follow will take up these strategies of reading. And to help my reader see what kinds of rhetorical acts might be possible for an author well-versed in this culture, a single novel will provide the context for this set of readings based in the Catholic imaginary: Galdós's Misericordia. Before proceeding with this analysis, however, I will contextualize the work itself, first within the author's life and œuvre in a brief sketch below, before I offer, in the next chapter of the present study, an introduction to the critical traditions in which he is framed.

Galdós, who lived from 1843 to 1920, has a strong claim to being part of Spain's nineteenth-century Catholic imaginary as I consider it, even though he is not necessarily understood to have used orthodox rhetoric strategically. He is universally known among critics as one of the most important Spanish literary figures, as a pinnacle figure of Spanish Realism, and as the "father of the modern Spanish novel" (the chief innovator of the genre since Spain's literary great Miguel de Cervantes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries).[28] Like other acknowledged great novelists of the European nineteenth-century (e.g., France's Émile Zola), Galdós is also typically known as having developed the novelistic genre in part as a vehicle for challenging a national audience with liberal ideas and, in certain cases, anticlericalism.

The author's familial beginnings hardly provided him with the basis for such liberalism. Rather, it was an acquired taste. He was born to a conservative and

[28] The most complete and critically accepted biography on Galdós is still H. Chonon Berkowitz's Pérez Galdós, Spanish Liberal Crusader (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1948). Yet most critics agree that its use of oral sources and the perspective it takes on the author's personality, as driven by his sexual needs, is outdated. In addition, the work fails to offer a lucid overview of the novelist's works. Alternatively, Walter T. Pattison's Benito Pérez Galdós (Boston: Twayne, 1975) is mentioned alongside Berkowitz's monograph in a bibliographical essay on the author appearing in Iris M. Zavala's edited work Romanticismo y realismo, vol. 5 (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1982) of the Francisco Rico series Historia y crítica de la literatura española. The subsequent sketch on the author's life and works draws mainly from Pattison's work.

moderately wealthy Basque family, settled in the provincial capital of Las Palmas (Grand Canary Island, Canary Islands, Spain). His mother was purportedly domineering and intolerant in her neo-Catholic views, characteristically pro-censorship and Carlist (backing Don Carlos as pretender to the Spanish throne after the Napoleonic invasion). Sending a young Galdós to the capital Madrid to study law, she might not have imagined her unfilled aspirations for him that would result. Instead of attending classes, Galdós found mentors at the famous "Atheneum," a literary club and bastion for Krausism (a German philosophy that emphasized finding tolerance or harmonizing conflicting entities in all contexts).[29] He, further, found work as journalist and editor for "progresista" periodicals, supportive of political ideals such as constitutional government and the freedom of religious choice and hostile, thus, to more traditional doctrines. His later career as novelist and playwright and, to some extent, politician would follow suit (N.B., the common people or working class would take him as their emblem, while reactionaries and younger aesthetic novelists would shun him).

Becoming a successful journalist, Galdós would thereafter try his hand at writing historical novels, much in vogue at the time, and also novels set more contemporarily--two genres on which he would leave a lasting creative signature for Spain. The historical novel had been a predominate genre of the older aesthetic of Romanticism, retelling national histories as the backdrop to gripping fictional individual dramas and love affairs. Along with other leading novelists of the period such as Russia's Leo Tolstoy, whose War and Peace (1865-69) was a likely source of inspiration for the Spanish novelist, Galdós would eschew glossy historical descriptions for a more profound interpretation of history in terms of the human spirit. His colossal five-part series of historical novels or

[29] For further reference, see Juan López-Morillas's standard work The Krausist Movement and Ideological Change in Spain, 1854-1874, trans. Frances M. López-Morillas (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge UP, 1981).

"Episódios nacionales" (writ. and pub. 1873-1900) traces three quarters of nineteenth-century Spanish history but with an aim of uncovering for Spaniards their own progressive and inevitable evolution as a nation, namely, as one defining itself by the promise of middle-class idealism. For a national audience that avidly read historical narratives and current events, the Episódios were a runaway popular and critical success--making the young author's literary reputation and supplying him throughout his life with well-needed funding (in the absence of artistic patronage). In comparison, later works would generally tend to be overshadowed by these early ones in terms of popularity, but not necessarily in critical acclaim.

If Galdós as historian would look to awaken a national consciousness, his turning to contemporary themes would further confront readers with their present-day religious and socio-political selves, trying to find ways to national regeneration. The novels that fall under this grouping, his "Novelas contemporaneas," were not only timely but also new in form and purpose, namely, socio-critical. Galdós began to compose and publish these works in opening years of Spain's Bourbon Restoration (from 1875), under which, notably, Catholicism was imposed as the national religion and as part of the educational system. This occurrence set the stage for renewed intolerances (Spain's termed "religious problem"), which the author would depict as a pervasive national vice in many of the earliest and most popular examples of this genre. These works are also considered to be the author's most anticlerical, although not necessarily anti-Catholic. Doña Perfecta (1876) raises the issue of religion as an educational directive and of ideological divisions within the nation. Here, the title character Doña Perfecta--rural matron, religious fanatic, and reactionary--cruelly arranges for the murder of her daughter's lover, a freethinking urban liberal, rather than conceding to the contamination of her traditionalist upbringing. Gloria (1876-77) questions larger racial and religious prejudices, mainly Catholic but also

Jewish. The story centers on the natural union (which produces an illegitimate child) but thwarted marriage of Gloria, an orthodox Spanish-Catholic, and Daniel Morton, an English-Jew who is at first assumed to be Protestant. (Despite its associations with anticlericalism, the work would also seem largely Krausist in inspiration.)

In later and more sophisticated works, the novelist would become influenced by both Zola's and Russian Naturalism--the latter ultimately appealing more for its spiritual element. Showing the influence of both, his acknowledged masterpiece Fortunata y Jacinta (1886-87) again features strong female characters to dramatize national-societal intolerances and divisions, which in this case are class-based. The peasant Fortunata, animalistic but inspired, bears the idle upper-class Jacinto an illegitimate child--but one that she will willingly relinquish to her rival in the affair or his baron wife Jacinta. Here Fortunata, marked as a daughter of Fortune or Fate, will be moved by a higher generosity of spirit--in turn seemingly providing a single shift in movement toward a middle point in Spain's class system (but the author's point still remains subtle).

As an ultimate product of this Naturalist phase, Galdós entered towards the end of his life (from the 1890s) into what is considered his most spiritual phase, in which socially deterministic elements in his writing give way to superior concerns of spirituality. Exemplifying his work in this later period, Nazarín (1895), Halma (1895), and Misericordia (1897) have all traditionally been read as Christian tracts that trace the struggle of each protagonist (respectively, Nazario Zaharín or "Nazarín;" Catalina, the Countess of Halma; and Benina) to follow Christ's teachings in the climate of bourgeois Spain, which no longer understands those values. But in my reading, the three protagonists impart different messages. Nazarín is paradigmatic but less practically imitable. And it is Halma's abundant wealth, and not her genuine worth, that enables her

exemplary charity. Benina is the only figure that presents practical charity in terms of a small-scale cultivation of virtues, as a means of national growth.

Seen through its protagonist as a more authentic depiction of the spirit of Christ and, moreover, judged as the most artistically successful of the three novels, Misericordia has been given critical recognition today as the second (religious) masterpiece. Yet, by ennobling Benina and her novel and, especially, by looking at its author as an international literary figure with a universal appeal, critics have tended to aestheticize the religious elements depicted, not otherwise acknowledging the more tangible Spanish Catholic context in which they are set.

As intimated above, Misericordia has traditionally been read as this kind of generally spiritual account. It depicts a sixty-year-old house servant and cook, Benina, whose self-abnegating acts of non-discriminate charity figure her as a paradigmatic good Christian and model for the common man and woman. Yet, for many critics, she is more than a mere good soul: she personifies Christ or St. Rita, as Benina's Christian name (Benigna de Casia) would suggest.

Having fallen into the depths of poverty (before the novel's plotline begins), Benina has been obliged to beg and borrow to make ends meet. In the first scene of the novel, she may be observed living out that hardship: begging outside the local parish church San Sebastián and, thereafter, enlisting an equally poor cohort, the blind Moor Almudena, into her cause (she asks him to hock his suit, and together they pick-pocket his drunken roommate). Soon after, one learns that the gesture is more altruistic than it at first seems. The money that she procures is meant to sustain her impoverished bourgeois mistress or employer, the partially senile Doña Paca, and part of her extended family--at first only her daughter Obdulia but later also a distant relative Ponte Delgado (a Don Quixote figure). And, moreover, as a kindness to the proud bourgeois, Benina has been

concealing her unorthodox ways of making ends meet in the household money by claiming that the funds in fact come from the extra housework she does at the residence of a local priest, Don Romualdo. This existence of this priest, however, is rather an elaborate lie, as over time Benina has being filling in and sharpening the details of his life to make him seem more real (his family, his habits, the dinner menus, etc.).

As Benina creates the persona of a mythical priest to enable her charity and cover up her own deeds, Almudena concocts his own set of lies to attract Benina--whom he now fancies. In what evolves as a kind of love story, the blind Moor attempts to capture the poor maid's spirit and imagination, but also her affection and comradeship (even proposing that the two marry). He tempts her with gains to be procured in mysterious ways, namely, by making ritualistic offerings to his professed god "King Samdai." But, later, when she loses interest, he plays a sentimental lover's game. He beats her with his cane in a fit of jealousy, only to immediately thereafter beg her forgiveness. And he asks that she join him in the slum-suburbs, at some distance from the city, where he will go to do his penance. Like any self-sacrificing saint, she agrees.

At this point, however, expenses threaten to overcome the poor Benina, and in desperation she takes yet another loan from another poor cohort, promising to return the funds once she is able to attend to her responsibilities or charities. But the task of looking after Almudena in the slums, traveling to and from the city, now proves more costly to her for many reasons. She is waylaid on each trek by starving residents to whose needs she compassionately attends, notably, re-enacting on one occasion Christ's multiplication of the loaves, She finds that her employer's health seems to be taking a turn for the worse: the old woman professes to have heard the voice (just outside her door) of the very priest that Benina knows only to be a pure invention. And, to make matters worse, when she finds Almudena, he is half starved and not cooperative about returning to

earning their living in the city by begging. But even begging now brings hard knocks, as Benina is apprehended by the police and both, consequently, are detained in the poorhouse.

In the extended absence of their maid, Paca and Ponte fall into despair. However, just as all hope seems lost, a miracle occurs: Don Romualdo appears on the scene (in the opinion of critics, by the intercessor of "St. Benina"?). He announces that a wealthy relative has died, leaving a substantial inheritance. Paca is not only ecstatic at this news, but is comforted by the fact that, as her maid's other employer, Romualdo would surely know Benina's whereabouts. But, to her surprise, the priest neither knows Benina nor is able to corroborate most of the details that Benina herself has supplied. (And the maid would seem to have at last been caught in her lie.)

When Benina is finally released, with Almudena in tow, it is she who is now surprised to find Paca at a new address. And when she knocks at the door to reclaim her old position (and to add Almudena to the lot), it is Juliana, Paca's daughter-in-law, who answers. Reluctantly, she lets the maid in to see Paca, where it is explained to Benina that she has been replaced and may not return as long as she keeps the company of Almudena, who may also have leprosy. The good Benina does not protest, but nevertheless leaves feeling betrayed and disillusioned by Paca's ingratitude. Having nowhere else to go, she returns with Almudena to his hovel apartment. But, later, at his urging the two move out to a hut lying just beyond the slums and along on the Calle de Toledo or the "Toledo highway."

But the novel also ends with a corollary message. In its final scene, Benina now finds Juliana at her door--the daughter of the bourgeoisie seeking out the maid. The young mother has been suffering from the guilt of having turned the maid out so cruelly. She brings Benina the wages she is due and asks for (spiritual) consolation that her

children will be well, which the faithful maid provides while bearing no ill. It is precisely by extending this forgiveness, looking to have won a moral victory, that Benina is rounded out in her portrait, for many critics, as a savior or saint.

This novel thus participates in Spain's Catholic imaginary on many levels, from everyday piety through Church institutions, and so it is the case study that will dominate the present investigations into the religious literature of Catholic Europe. Taken by critics to imply Galdós's espousal of a general Christian good, Misericordia provides a particularly fruitful ground for arguing the value of reading strategies that reclaim the realism of religion in Galdós's Spain. As a case study, it reveals much about how critics have treated this great European literature, and also what kinds of resources a truly engaged writer could find in this purportedly most conservative archive of culture.

Beginning the Task

In each of the next three chapters, I will address one archive of Spain's Catholic imaginary as it appears in Misericordia, to show how a close reading of the sort that I assert here can reclaim a much more critical text than many have assumed. To make that case clearer, I start each chapter with brief reference to traditional readings of the elements from the Catholic imaginary on which I focus. I then move to reclaim a more three-dimensional reading of what a contemporaneous public might have found in the novel as echoes of such a commonly held body of cultural knowledge.

Thereafter, as I noted above, I extend this argument in a final, fourth chapter, by recommending readings of religious imaginaries in other texts by canonical (and often Realist) Spanish and French authors. The cases that I make show that all religious readings are not as elaborate as those recoverable from Galdós's text. (Hugo, for example, used simple religious references to structure Les Misérables and in ways quite

obvious to his readership but nonetheless handled his material masterfully--to tell a story of a very particular secular saint, one from outside the institutional church.) Yet these cases also reflect how critics' negligence about or disinterest in local religious imaginaries has contributed to undervaluing or even to misreading texts. Such texts may well belong in Europe's canon of great literature, but have suffered in a general neglect of the reality of religious imaginaries for readers and writers alike.

Finally, in the conclusion to this study, I turn back to the more general question that motivated it: the necessity of reading religious cultural archives as part of historical cultural interpretations, without presupposing their alignment with strictly conservative points of view.

Chapter One:

The National Spaniard Behind New Criticism's "Transcendent" Artist

As stated in the introduction to this project, I will treat Misericordia, my case study, within the Spanish-Catholic culture of its contemporaneous era. Before proceeding to the individual readings however, I will survey in this section what have been some of the larger patterns in a standardizing criticism, notably, since 1943,[30] on its author Galdós and on the work itself to set my argument in critical context.[31] To ground this case, I will first point to the critical disparity between what may generally be called the author's "transcendent" quality--the international and timeless appeal of his literary aesthetics and

[30] In his comprehensive Galdós and His Critics (Toronto: U of Toronto, 1985), Anthony Percival remarks that "the year 1943 represents an important landmark in Galdosian studies; the centennial of the writer's birth marks the start of a resurgence of interest in the man and his works" (34).

[31] Because this criticism is voluminous, I will only be discussing major voices and approaches. For a broader scope on the author, consult the standard bibliographies Theodore A. Sackett's Pérez Galdós: An Annotated Bibliography (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1968) and Hensley C. Woodbridge's Benito Pérez Galdós: A Selective Annotated Bibliography (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1975)--the latter of which contains a full listing of post-1943 criticism on Galdós's novels. For a broad narrative overview as well as an ample selected bibliography, consult Percival's Galdós and His Critics, which approaches criticism on the author from the perspectives of biographical criticism, literary history, literature and ideas (the emergence of the sociological and interdisciplinary approach), and Galdós's novel and non-novelistic writings. For essays by Percival that focus or extend the historical range of coverage of this larger work see "Tendencias de la crítica sobre Galdós: 1870-1920," Anales Galdosianos 19 (1984): 61-69 and "Recent Currents in Galdós Studies," Galdós House of Fiction: Papers Given at the Birmingham Galdós Colloquium, ed. A. H. Clarke and E. J. Rodgers (Llangrannog: Dolphin, 1991) 169-219--the latter which looks with more distance at criticism from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s. For shorter overviews and bibliographies, see the introduction to the Galdós section in Zavala's Romanticismo y realismo (a volume of the Rico series) and John W. Kronik's introduction to the parallel section on Galdós in another of Zavala's edited works Romanticismo y realismo: primer supplemento, vol. 5.1 (Barcelona: Crítica, 1994) of the same series. See also Kronik's "The Present State of Galdós Studies," Hispanic Review 65 (1997) 431-44, an update review on Galdós criticism for the years 1992 and 1993.

(religious) ideology--and his national-political identity within his historical moment. Here it is not my intention to disprove the author's or the work's importance (nor to refute "timelessness" as a quality of great artists or art in general), but to suggest that the historical context and features of a work should not be ignored, so that (anachronistic) misinterpretations can be avoided. The criticism about Misericordia's own preface--the author's programmatic statement about his approach to Realism--will serve as my point of entrance into and as a microcosm of the problematics of this standard critical treatment.

After having demonstrated such shortcomings in standard modern accounts, I will then open the way to my own project by reminding readers that this disparity had not always defined Galdós critically--that earlier critics fully acknowledged his relation to his historical context. Rather, the author's modern reception as a major author and, specifically, as a religious one, was a direct result of these older polemics that had circumscribed his reputation and which, it seemed, needed to be countered. His earliest critical readership, in Galdós's contemporaneous era through the turn of the century, had known him as a national proponent of anticlericalism[32] and as an artist making an engaged critique of national conscience. In consequence, I will briefly account for this critical change in agenda, as the predominant approach to both author and text turned religious/aesthetic rather than nationalist and social-critical. Taking this specific case of a national Galdós scholarship grappling with questions of Spanish identity and culture--as well as with religious stigmas--, I will demonstrate how subsequent agendas, focusing on

[32] During his lifetime, Galdós had been seen as intervening politically, that is, as an anticlerical opposing church involvement in civic affairs and government, notably, involvement in national education. A stigma for him then, more contemporary accounts, often non-national ones, would focus on this ideology in Galdós as a feature of his modernity or of the progressive commentary of his work (largely appearing in an early period). In this essay, I will not focus on this aspect of the criticism as the religious approach to the author has globally moved away from this reading. In addition, it is from the standpoint of what has looked conservative and religious--and not what has looked more progressive or anti-church--to standard scholarship that I will build my case for the author as a progressive thinker.

modernization rather than nation-building, were at pains to wipe the author clean of the national Catholic culture in his work. Finally, I will look specifically at Misericordia as having played a significant role in how critics brought about this change in Galdós's artistic identity. That is, critics of later eras would straightforwardly transform the work itself from a national commentary into a moral-religious work and, ultimately, into a aesthetic and philosophically Christian (as opposed to cultural Catholic) masterpiece--a re-conceptualization which rectified what was puzzling to a century of critics who did not necessarily see the power of its rhetoric as a social call.

Misericordia's Preface, or Galdós's Word on Realism Suppressed

Over a decade after the novel's original publication, the preface to Misericordia, written by the author, appeared for the first time in a 1913 Spanish-language edition of the novel (published in France Great Britain, Australia, and New York).[33] In it, Galdós adopts a "behind the scenes" stance on the creation of his own work as an artist, claiming that he gleaned the narrative's realistic detail from the Madrid streets and, notably, how he took the street's inspiration for the sketch of the novel's Almudena. An engaging anecdote on the author's part that would likely have brought his artistic method to life for his readership, the preface has been considered a central statement by the author about his own aesthetics, yet one which, in the decades to follow, would nevertheless pose a handful of problems for the new century's critics, especially those interested in creative aesthetics.

But before further characterizing this criticism and its ends, I will first examine more closely the troubling piece itself. In the preface, the author takes on the guise of a

[33] See Benito Pérez Galdós, "Prefacio del autor, escrito especialmente para esta edición," Misericordia (Paris: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1913) 5-9.

natural scientist or ethnographic field researcher, telling of his preparation for writing by means of his tenacious observation of the ambience and inhabitants of some of the most infamously poor and crime-ridden sectors of Madrid. He claims that he would often enter these rather dangerous sectors, accompanied by police escort or doubling as a public health physician. On one of these observational and adventurous jaunts, he recounts, he came across a street-roughened blind man notable for hurling curses in a hybridized Spanish, mixed with elements of Arabic or Hebrew. Offering the man a modest charity and a drink at local taverns, the author explains that he would become the blind man's scrupulous observer and, further, portraitist, encouraging him to recount the details of his life and then himself trekking to the various sites of the Madrid quarter frequented by his subject.[34] As a corollary to this encounter, Galdós will claim "de este modo adquirí ese tipo interesantísmo" (Pérez Galdós, "Prefacio del autor" 7) ["in this manner I would acquire that interesting type"],[35] qualifying this very real exotic personage as the source for his own Almudena, discovered and lifted directly from experience--rather than having been invented.

Such a self-portrait and portrait of this work was immediately recognizable within Realism[36] and Naturalism prevalent in Europe of the author's most contemporaneous

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[34] "El moro Almudena, Mordejai, que parte tan principal tiene en la acción de Misericordia, fué arrancado del natural por una feliz coincidencia. Un amigo, que como yo acostumbrada á flanear de calle en calle observando escenas y tipos, díjome que en el Oratorio del Caballero de Gracia pedía limosna un ciego andrajoso, que por su facha y lenguaje parecía de estripe agarena. Acudí á verle y quedé maravillado de la salvaje rudeza de aquel infeliz, que en español aljamiado interrumpido á cada instante por juramentos terroríficos, me prometió contarme su romántica historia á cambio de un modesto socorro. Le llevé conmigo por las calles céntricas de Madrid, con escala en varias tabernas donde le invite á contarme su desmayado cuerpo con libaciones contrarias á leyes de su raza. . . . El afán de estudiarla [la figura] intensamente me llevó al barrio de las Injurias, polvoriento y desolado. . . . Desde allí, me lancé á las Cambroneras, lugar de relativa amenidad á las orillas del río Manzanares. . . . Las Cambroneras, la Estación de las Pulgas, la Puente segoviana, la opuesta orrilla del Mazanares hasta la casa llamada Goya, donde el famoso pintor tuvo su taller, completaron mi estudio del bajo de Madrid, inmenso filón de elementos pintorescos y de riqueza de lenguaje" (Pérez Galdós, "Prefacio del autor" 6-7).

[35] If not otherwise indicated, translations that appear in brackets following the original are my own.

[36] Following Linda Nochlin, the conventional view of Realist art as deriving from a "value-free world view" and a "style-free or transparent style" and as not imposing upon the reproduction of reality may be

era,[37] as well as within Spanish Positivism.[38] That is, these schools of thought particularly value preservation and observation as the basis of art itself. In this context, it would thus not be surprising that Galdós specifically claims the pre-existence of his Almudena (here referred to by his other name "Mordejai") and the acquisition of the character in a form untouched by the hand of invention: "Toda la verdad del pintoresco Mordejai es obra de él mismo, pues poca parte tuve yo en la descripcion de esta figura" (7) ["All the truth of the picturesque type Mordejai is the product of himself, thus little part did I have in the description of this figure"]. And neither is it surprising that he claims this elaboration as

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approached as a perpetuation of the movement's own "self-created myth." While this view was to inspire proponents and fuel detractors and critics, it has also unfairly denied Realism an affinity with a more contemporary perception of the relationship of art and reality. A more precise description of the aesthetic, disentangled from its myth, centers around the aim, Nochlin determines, of "fidelity to visual reality" that produces art by scrupulous scientific-like or empirical investigation and, in many cases, limits that art by the representation of (contemporary) phenomena that could readily be observed. What Realists observed and brought into being as art, unlike other artistic traditions applying a standard of verisimilitude, was that which they considered to be the truth of their socio-historical moment and of their national fabric, e.g., the bourgeois (but in protest), the poor, the ordinary objects and "temporal fragments" of daily life, the beautiful and the ugly. With methods turning towards detachment from the Romantics' insincerity in "intellectual formulae" or emotive conventions or the artificial foregrounding of one class or another, it was in the attempt to represent more contemporary subjects within the democratic spirit of the age where Realist art begins to serve, Nochlin specifies, as an "art of the people." That is, with an agenda more or less of social protest, it would also attempt to represent the unembellished truth of its contemporaneous period, expressing a value and fulfilling a role in the social structure. See her Realism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) 13-56, particularly the section "The Nature of Realism."

[37] Roland N. Stromberg, who treats Realism and Naturalism as European trends, approximates Realism as extending throughout 1848-71 and Naturalism as continuing nearly through the remainder of the century 1871-1890. See the "Introduction" to his edited anthology Realism, Naturalism, and Symbolism: Modes of Thought and Expression in Europe, 1848-1914 (New York: Walker, 1968) ix. Nochlin delimits a longer period, from roughly 1840 until 1870-80 for Realism (13). I do not wish to engage the distinction between Realism and Naturalism here in deference to Galdós's own application of the notion of real as his reference point.

[38] A nineteenth-century philosophy analogous with traditional Empiricism and Naturalism, Positivism derives knowledge from what may be positively perceived by the senses and, distinguishing itself from other theories, locates its scientific mode of perception as the contemporaneous stage in an evolutionary process of human thought. The movement found its outlet in Spanish intellectual life in concerns of national socio-political and economic progress and renovation, which the Generation of 1898 is famously known for espousing early on and then abandoning. The work I do here might open up further discussion of certain continuities between Galdós's project and that of this younger generation. For this explanation and insight, I rely on "positivism," The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy; "positivism," The Oxford Companion to Philosophy; and Donald L. Shaw, The Nineteenth Century, A Literary History of Spain (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1972) 180-81.

justification for his store of portraits of street personages, systematically regenerated and reused in this work[39] and reproducing or representing in this way a particular period of social history. Given that the author subscribes to and simultaneously qualifies his own efforts as a collector of anthropological portraits, rather than as a creative artist, it would in fact be surprising that any number of more modern and formalist criticisms from the early to mid-twentieth century, when looking back at Galdós's preface, would choose to reframe his assertions as a dialogue supporting the Romantic aesthetic of artistic genius,[40] which over the time had revived in Spain as Modernist.[41] If critics of this school were to

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[39] Using characters from Misericordia's cast as a point of reference in a system of borrowing and re-borrowing, Galdós details his method for the reader:

> El tipo de señá Benina, la criada filantrópica, del más puro carácter evangélico, procede de la documentación laboriosa que reuní para componer los cuatro tomos de Fortunata y Jacinta. De la misma procedencia son Doña Paca y su hija, tipos de la burguesía tronada, y el elegante menesteroso Frasquito Ponte. . . . Diferentes figures vinieron á este tomo de los anteriores, El amigo Manso, Miau, los Torquemadas, etc., y del mismo modo, del contingente de Misericordia pasaron otras á los tomos que escribí después: es el sistema que he seguido siempre de formar un mundo complejo, heterogéneo y variadísmo, para dar idea de la muchedumbre social en un período determinado de la Historia. ("Prefacio del autor" 8)

[40] In a his acclaimed essay tracing the normative concepts of European Romanticism, René Wellek conceives of Romantic aesthetics as attempting to create an art divergent from that of French Neo-Classicism and the Enlightenment. This new aesthetics replaced sources of knowledge found in the older divisions of reason and sentiment with a Neo-Platonist conception of intellectual intuition or imagination. To exemplify this quality of imagination, Wellek lingers on William Wordsworth's prelude to Lyrical Ballads that hails the poet as seer or creator in the sense of producing an art that, through its interpretation of reality, reveals the nature of that reality to a lay audience. For this discussion of Romantic imagination in a broad treatment of Romanticism as a critical and artistic mode, see Wellek's "The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History" in his Concepts of Criticism (New Haven: Yale UP, 1971) 165, 179-80. For a more focused discussion on Romantic creative genius that suggestively sets the aesthetic distinction Romantics were making of themselves as poet-artist-creator against the commercialization of the literary market and industrialization towards the end of the nineteenth century in Britain, see Raymond Williams's chapter "The Romantic Artist" in his Culture and Society 1780-1950 (New York: Columbia UP, 1983) 48-64.

[41] Spanish Modernism or "modernismo" is generally recognized as a liberating artistic movement cultivated in Latin America after its southern Wars of Independence (1880s) and transplanted to Spain under the influence of one of its leading figures Nicaraguan Rubén Darío, who immigrated to Europe around the turn of the century. While liberation constituted experimentation in poetic mode and thematics, In The Twentieth Century, A Literary History of Spain (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1972), G. G. Brown recognizes in modernismo "a resurgence of the anguish that characterized European Romantic literature, which seemed for a time to have been put to flight by the self-confidence of nineteenth-century faith in scientific rationalism" (65). Resisting this scientific rationality and empiricism by the cult of artistic genius or by a faith in the more individualized artistic reflection and lucidity inherited from Romanticism, the

claim Galdós as one of Spain's earliest important literary Modernists, they would have to detach him from associations with a more nineteenth-century science or social movement.

In one of the earliest efforts to recuperate Galdós as this kind of modern author, major critic Joaquín Casalduero seems to acknowledge the author's claim in Misericordia's preface to documentary precision in the creation of Almudena: "De este ciego se sentía muy orgulloso Galdós, y él nos dice como lo habia tomado de la realidad."[42] Yet, he will only accept the work as Realist in so far as its Realism might serve as a threshold or a transition to a more transcendent element or style--not recalling Spanish history or polemics but with a universal and timeless appeal--thus aligning the author with the aesthetics of a more contemporary literary vanguard.

Later accounts, such as those of Robert Ricard (1959 and 1968)[43] and of Denah Lida (1961),[44] would neither discount the author's Realism nor openly refute the

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Modernist artist-poet sought to conceptualize what was lacking in life (truth, beauty, etc.) in formal structures and images non-referential to an observable reality. In this way, it would develop the genius of its forbearer's reflective art (still dependent upon art as representation, e.g., of nature) into a height of self-reflection and -reflexivity. Where not otherwise noted here, I rely on Allen W. Phillips and Kathleen N. March, "Modernismo," The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, 1993 ed. and Charles Altieri, "Modernism and Postmodernism," The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, 1993 ed.

[42] This essay to which I am referring was originally published separately as Joaquín Casalduero, "Significado y forma de Misericordia," PMLA 60 (1944): 1104-10. Later, it would appear with some additions incorporated as an appendix into the author's seminal Vida y obra de Galdós (1843-1920), 4a ed. ampliada (Madrid: Gredos, 1974) 228-36. Here I reference the latter version, "Significado y forma de Misericordia" 231. N.B., Percival acknowledges this monograph to be the single most important contribution to foundational scholarship on Galdós. While no longer authoritative in its conclusions, the critic does note that the work still serves as a pool of ideas from which more contemporary critics draw. (Galdós and His Critics 34-41).

[43] In Robert Ricard's "Sur le personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Bulletin Hispanique 61 (1959): 12-25, the critic assumes certain proof of creativity to lie in a historical inconsistency or erroneous documentation seemingly uncovered in the given narrative detail of Almudena's originating from rural Sephardic landowners in Morocco. However, in an ending notation "Addition de 1961" to a republication of the study, "Sur le personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Galdós et ses romans, 2ème éd. augmenté (Paris: l'Institut d'Études Hispaniques, 1968) 53-64, Ricard indicates Pierre Flammand's Les Communautés israélites du sud-marocain (1960) as indirectly substantiating the ethnic composite of the character's origins as factual. (Flammand finds Jewish Moroccan communities to have been agricultural and religiously syncretic, i.e., Jewish, Muslim, pagan.)

disclosure of Galdós as a self-aware writer of these movements. Yet they would suggest that the novelist remains incomplete in his disclosures or elusive out of creative modesty or, rather, that utterances found in Misericordia's preface constitute a coy assertion of creative invention or the author's own (Romantic) genius, all done obliquely.[45] The reading of Robert Ricard, for example, will qualify Galdós's art as lying beyond its documentation. To make this case, he focuses on the statement, "[t]oda la verdad del pintoresco Mordejai es obra de él mismo, pues poca parte tuve yo en la descripcion de esta figura" (already mentioned above), suggesting that, while it appears to qualify the whole portrait of Almudena as a replication of reality it in fact implicitly admits to the opposition "documentary / creativity." The critic explains that the author's choice of phrasing "[t]oda la verdad del pintoresco Mordejai es obra de él mismo" ["all the truth of the picturesque type Almudena is the product of himself"] holds within it an implied "all that is not truth" and thus a separating out of elements into (a) the more mechanical reproduction of character and (b) a creative deviance from the reality of that character. The continuation, "poco parte tuve yo en la descripción de esta figura" ["thus little part did I have in the description of this figure"], suggests what many formalist critics would

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[44] Denah Lida, "De Almudena y su lenguaje," Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica 15 (1961): 297-308.

[45] The critical position that Ricard and Lida take on the preface, reading Almudena as more a creative fiction than a mechanized-documentary reality, also conditioned a number of related debates on the creative beginnings or genesis of Almudena. This debate's major players A. F. Lambert and Vernon A. Chamberlin both argue for Galdós's creativity, albeit with different purposes. Lambert considered the author's use of the documentary or oral or living sources (which, as the critic himself finds, aesthetic criticism makes less than creative). Chamberlin found parallels with non-documentary or print sources (adaptation is still, if not more so, a creative discipline for Chamberlin). These debates are found in Lambert's "Galdós and Concha-Ruth Morell," Anales Galdosianos 8 (1973): 33-49, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Taller Digital de la Universidad de Alicante, 13 July 2006 <http://www.cervantesvirtual/hermeroteca/>; Chamberlin's "More Light on Galdós' Sephardic Source Materials: A Reply to A. F. Lambert," Anales Galdosianos 9 (1974): 167-68, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Taller Digital de la Universidad de Alicante, 13 July 2006 <http://www.cervantesvirtual/hermeroteca/>; and Chamberlin's "The Importance of Rodrigo Soriano's Moros y cristianos in the Creation of Misericordia," Anales Galdosianos 13 (1978): 105-09, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Taller Digital de la Universidad de Alicante, 13 July 2006 <http://www.cervantesvirtual/hermeroteca/>. I will take up Chamberlin's arguments but with respect to his socio-historical approach to Almudena in my chapter "Almudena as Catholic Patron for a Syncretic Spain."

find as a necessary qualification: that part of the Almudena figure documents an observed exterior, while simultaneously a deeper development of character reconfigures that exterior.[46] By this analysis, Ricard determines the element of fiction or creativity in Galdós that will allow him to define Galdós's novelistic aesthetic as moving beyond what Realism conceives too narrowly--the non-Realist being somehow the superior artist.[47]

Not deconstructing Galdós as overtly as Ricard, Lida approaches the argument for Galdós's creativity by reading the preface as an ironic or intentional but nevertheless elusive play on the author's part. She interprets Galdós otherwise as casting doubt, as a kind of trickster or faux naive, on his own claims at documentary status. She begins to argue this perspective by asking why--if the stated intention of the author is to reproduce meticulously a reality drawing on a real model represented in the preface--does the detail of religious orientation appear as altered in his moving from the model of the blind beggar, who is reputedly Muslim, to his narrative reproduction, who claims to be Jewish (303)? For Lida, this purported inconsistency (one which I will later show to be crucial to Galdós's cultural analysis) constitutes the text's way of pointing to an inherent artistic meaning in the text, not necessarily synonymous with the author's stated intention nor materially present in the Spanish Realism of the era. Thus she determines that the blind beggar of the preface acts as the "super-modelo" or the literary gene pool from which the

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[46] The ingenuity behind this critical maneuver in Ricard was called to my attention by Lambert's gloss on the critic (33-49).

[47] Taking the analysis further, Ricard attributes to Galdós a general reluctance--for reasons unknown--to appear as anything other than a documentary artist or a Realist: "Pourquoi l'auteur ne nous parle-t-il pas de cet element imaginaire? Il ne semble pas avoir jamais eu le gout d'attirer l'attention sur cet aspet de son oeuvre: il a toujours préférer passer pour un adepte du realisme et du naturalisme" ("Sur le Personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Galdós et ses romans 60). Here he raises an interesting question, but one couched in a bias to Lambert also refers, assuming the documentary method and, moreover, Realism to be unimaginative. Because it tries to eliminate this bias, the question might initially better be posed "why did Galdós want to portray his work as verisimilar, claiming it as indistinguishable from observed reality and the realistic portrait of Almudena as self-spawned?" This is a question that I will begin to answer, suggesting that in the preface Galdós was applying Realist rhetoric and a standard of measure of a successful Realism to his work.

author selectively draws in order to recreate the Almudena of the narrative--ultimately an invented figure rather than a realistic one. Reading the preface as ironic in this way, Lida makes a critique defining Galdós's creativity as the aesthetic transformation of a Spanish reality that, more than represent the contemporary or the historical, must be seen as transcendent, as all great art purportedly would be.[48]

In the preface, as I have shown, Galdós suggestively frames himself as a Realist, but these critics will claim (in a refutation of the traditional intentional fallacy) that the text speaks independently from that depiction and more authoritatively. This strategy is quite typical of formalist criticisms, but particularly of New Criticism, an aesthetic school of the half-century span around World War II that tried to recuperate or renovate authors of older (mimetic) traditions as canonical.[49] By distancing the work of these authors from

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[48] In arguing for Almudena as this a-historical expression of creativity, Lida again sets up an ironic juxtaposition of the outward claim that the author makes in the preface for the social relevancy of his character and that which she assumes to be the intrinsic argument of the preface or the text itself:

> Nada ha olvidado Galdós en su tarea de dar forma acabadísma a la expresión personal--lírica e irrefrenable--del misterioso mendigo. El prefacio querría aseguramos, bajo palabra de escritor naturalista, que el habla de Almudena corresponde a un modo genérico y social de humanidad, bien localizable 'en un período determinado de la Historia'; pero, por otra parte, Galdós se ha esforzado ahincadamente en labrar un lenguaje exclusivo, un mundo idiomático aparte que no conviene a ningún papel genérico de árabe, ni de sefardí, ni de mendigo extranjero en Madrid, sino al individualismo héroe de la fe y la imaginación pura en Misericordia: al único e inconfundible Mordejai . . . ." ("De Almudena y su lenguaje" 308)

While I claim Lida's reading here and elsewhere to be typical of New Criticism in an overall critique of the refusal to acknowledge the socio-historical perspective, Lambert again critiques the method itself as being implicitly illogical given that, as he argues, "the artistic process consists precisely in the ability to give the individual character or phenomenon a generic or historical significance without diminishing our sense of its uniqueness" (33-49).

[49] New Criticism may be distinguished by its rejection of Romanticism's and impressionistic criticism's respective appreciation of the referential data of artist (i.e., authorial intention and historical-biographical context) and of critic (i.e., affective judgments). In this way, it envisions poetry or art to be an autonomous entity whose internal structure (by close reading) determines its meaning and the text itself, separate from the author's alleged intention, as authoritatively meaningful. It has further been distinguished as an early development that "eliminates authorial intention and context as reference points for discussions about the meaning of literary works" Remaining independent of other disciplines (e.g., history), art as perceived by New Critics contains its own truth that, namely, opposes science (or the Positivism of the era) by tolerating and attempting to reconcile existential tensions, ambiguities, or paradoxes that cloud observable reality. Also, in Lambert's critique of Ricard and Lida, he affirms New Criticism's strategies applied to Galdós as being "consistent with an enterprise which has characterized much recent work on Galdós: namely, the emphasis on the role of the creative imagination in his novels and the downgrading of documentary

their historical-cultural circumstance and social realism, New Critics would often show it as a transfiguration into something higher, proving timeless creativity. But such readings might better be characterized as an overdetermined aestheticization, labored or strained in its argumentation to rescue novelists such as Galdós from their own programs and to designate them as an authentic artists, not necessarily native to their original context.

The more tangible expression of this critical pressure on the Galdós of Misericordia, I believe, is the frequent elision of the preface itself from modern and standard editions of the work.[50] This revision would seem to be an effective means of removing a critically troubling or polemical implication of Realism from discussions of the novel, notably, in order to cast it instead as Galdós's aesthetic religious masterpiece (see below for this development). Indeed, the preface was at one time frequently mentioned or discussed in criticism on the novel, but now, as with its physical presence in editions, it too has faded from the critical dialogue.[51] For this reason, particularly, I

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naturalist elements associated with the 'garbancero' gibe" (the latter term to be unpacked below) (33-49). Where not otherwise indicated, my sources are Donald J. Childs, "New Criticism," Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms, ed. Irena Rima Makaryk (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993); Charles Altieri, "The New Criticism," The Continuum Encyclopedia of Modern Criticism and Theory, gen. ed. Julian Wolfreys (New York: Continuum, 2002); and Litz, A. Walton, Louis Menand, and Lawrence Rainey, eds., Modernism and the New Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), particularly Menand and Rainey's "Introduction."

[50] While not included in my edition Misericordia, eds. Luciano García Lorenzo and Carmen Menéndez Onrubia, 2a ed (Madrid: Cátedra, 1982), publishing in Spain; it can be found without critical commentary in Misericordia, eds., María Zambrano and Andrés Moreno Montalvo (Barcelona: Norma, 1993), publishing in Barcelona, Spain and in Latin America.

[51] Chamberlin's commentary on Misericordia, which spans a thirty year period (1964-1994), offers a representative example of surging and fading interest in the preface as it raised the question of the realism of Misericordia's blind beggar, Almudena. Within this period, in which the critic mainly addresses the creative purpose of Galdós's early Jewish figures (i.e., Berber and Sephardic Jews) and Misericordia's social function, his publications of the mid-1960s to late-1970s respond to the leading commentary on the preface (of, namely, Ricard and Lida) and on the genesis debate surrounding Almudena. See the following works from this critic (appearing here in chronological order; some already mentioned): "Galdós' Sephardic Types," Symposium 17.2 (1963): 85-100; "Galdós' Use of Yellow in Character Delineation," PMLA 79 (1964): 158-63; "The Significance of the Name Almudena in Galdós' Misericordia," Hispania 47.3 (1964): 491-96; "More Light on Galdós' Sephardic Source Materials: A Reply to A. F. Lambert" (1974); "The Importance of Rodrigo Soriano's Moros y cristianos in the Creation of Misericordia" (1978); "Galdós and the Movimiento pro-sefardita," Anales Galdosianos 16 (1981): 91-103, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Taller Digital de la Universidad de Alicante, 13 July 200

feel that reviving its discussion is key in reconsidering the novel, and novelist more widely, in their national cultural aesthetics, namely, Realism and Catholicism, as realist elements of the Spain represented in the novel. To begin to demonstrate why and how this standard reading of Misericordia has suppressed these considerations, I will turn back now to a major critical voice on Galdós whose very particular (non-aesthetic) reading of the author not only pre-dates New Critical standardizations but created its standard to be countered.

The Bad Rap of "Galdós, el garbancero"

Before the mid-twentieth century critics began to read the author as distanced from his Spanish culture, Galdós was critically circumscribed in his original context as referring to a set of very national concerns and polemics, most particularly in artistic and religious moves toward modernization of Spain. Early twentieth century accounts, for example, would portray him as the "father of the modern Spanish novel" and as the spiritual and political conscience that had inspired the Generation of 1898, which stressed thematics or issues surrounding national cultural regeneration.[52] Among these early twentieth-century critics, the commentary of Spanish prose stylist and playwright Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936) remains revealing and crucial in regard to the shaping and reshaping of Galdós for modern criticism.

To understand Valle-Inclán as a controversial critic of Galdós, it is necessary to first note his own rather unusual development as an artist and, particularly, as an artist

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<http://www.cervantesvirtual/hermeroteca/>. Chamberlin's commentary on the character will be further treated in my chapter "Almudena as Catholic Patron for a Syncretic Spain."

[52] Leslie Bannister Walton's Pérez Galdós and the Novel of the Nineteenth Century (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1927)--commonly considered to be the first and most significant full-length work on Galdós of its time (Woodbridge 35; Percival, Galdós and His Critics 207)--takes this approach to the author.

opposing period aesthetics.[53] While one might expect a radical voice of a literary youth to mellow to a more conservative one in later years, Valle-Inclán would develop in his youth as a political conservative and a formalist in terms of literary aesthetics--that is, as a Modernist--, only to re-make himself later in life into a more radical challenge to those devotions (Brown 23). Playing off Modernist expressions of bourgeois refinement and beauty, the author would break from this tradition by elaborating an artistic approach that sought to recreate the underclass' perspective. This approach would purposefully degrade or deform his stylistic choices to represent a Madrid seen by the author as artistically and politically stagnant, even degenerate. His vision of this new Madrid, less aesthetic and hence less stagnant, would take shape in his stylistically absurd and grotesque satire Luces de Bohemia, appearing serialized in 1920, notably, the year of Galdós's death.

Famous for its depiction of Spain's contemporaneous literary bohemia as ineffectual, Luces has also become infamous for its particular moment of homage paid to the memory of literary elder Galdós.[54] This most cited moment occurs as a brief exchange between Modernist poet Dorio de Gadex and the impoverished blind poet Max Estrella.[55] Here the Modernist will glorify his artistic generation, not excluding Max, by calling them "poets" or a separate class of intellectual elites: "[u]sted es poeta y los poetas somos aristocracia" ["you are a poet, and we poets are aristocracy"]. Further, he

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[53] My sources here are standard evaluations of the author and his aesthetics in Verity Smith's Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Twayne's World Authors Ser. 160, (New York: Twayne, 1973); Brown 23-31; Kathryn G. McConnell, "Ramón del Valle-Inclán," Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 134: Twentieth-Century Spanish Poets, Second Series, ed. Jerry Phillips Winfield, 1994, Literature Resource Center, Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 15 June 2006 <http://infotrac.galegroup.com>; Leda Schiavo, "Ramón del Valle-Inclán," Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 322: Twentieth-Century Spanish Fiction Writers, ed. Marta E. Altisent and Cristina Martínez-Carazo, 2006, Literature Resource Center, Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 15 June 2006 <http://infotrac.galegroup.com>.

[54] For a standard analysis of the text, I have relied on Alonso Zamora Vicente, introduction, Luces de Bohemia: Esperpento by Ramón del Valle-Inclán, ed. Alonso Zamora Vicente (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1996). 21-23.

[55] Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Luces de Bohemia: Esperpento, ed. Alonso Zamora Vicente (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1996). 78-79.

will point to a clear historical irony in the suggestion that Max be named to the Real Academia Española (the official royal institution responsible for regulating the Spanish language) as a replacement for Galdós--to whose name he will add, notably, the epithet "el garbancero" or, literally, "the garbanzo seller" or "the chickpea seller." (See below for critical assessments, including my own further insights.) Max will answer suggestively by redefining himself as an artist with a more common subject: "[y]o me siento pueblo" and "[y]o había nacido para ser tribuno de la plebe" ["I feel as / of the people" and "I was born to be voice or tribunal of the plebs"]. But as much as Max redefines himself as poet of a new generation, what is the reader to conclude of this new generation's critical assessment of Galdós, especially of this implied opposition between poet-aristocrat and "poet of the people"?

In the aftermath of this name-calling and redefining of names, this narrative moment would leave its critical mark on Galdós reception by critics. Evidence of its resurgence in landmark aesthetic accounts is again clear, for example, in Ricard. Attempting to challenge the notion of Galdós as an insufficiently creative and, further, non-analytic writer, Ricard will interpret the new epithet as an insult or implication of creative sterility: "[I]l ne faut pas . . . faire de lui [Galdós] le garbancero injustement décrié. Galdós n'est pas une simple et géniale mécanique à raconter et à décrire. Il est rare que ses récis ne comportent pas une pensée explicite ou cachée" ("Sur le personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Galdós et ses romans 60) ["It is not necessary to make of him [Galdós] the wrongfully decried garbancero. Galdós is not a simple and talented mechanic who would retell and describe. It is rare that his narratives do not offer a definite or hidden thought"]. Like the critic in this case, a later generation of New Critics would not only take Valle-Inclán's gesture as a wrongful assessment of what art needed to be, but, moreover, as a simply clumsy public relations statement on the part of the

younger artist, as he hoped to gain prominence by eschewing traces of greatness (in the contemporary sense of creative and transcendent) found in past literary figures. The New Critical answer to this wrongdoing, as they saw it, would become a new generation of efforts at critical recuperation of Galdós, suturing the distance that had been opened between his work and the artistic cutting edge.

Mid-twentieth century scholarship that rejected the later judgments of Valle-Inclán retreated from his depiction of Galdós as garbancero and all the potential meaning or insight that it might contain. More recently, critics have assessed the term more subtly as they move beyond the idea that a national poet needed to be an aesthetic voice. Luis Iglesias Feijoo, for instance, argues that critical understanding of Valle-Inclán's evaluation has been based upon a very literal interpretation of Dorio de Gadex, whose portrait parodies the Modernists and whose pointed words and actions contributes to that parody.[56] Supporting this thesis, he reminds that this character not only incarnates the excesses of a generation of Modernists but also the excess of a notoriously impudent and, in fact, existing writer of the period who signed with the penname "Dorio de Gadex." With this correspondence in mind, the critic posits that--rather than serve to insult a leading figure of the older generation--the young Modernist's recommendation, steeped in the author's sarcasm, would seem to parody the particular arrogance of this younger generation. Yet, in my opinion, revisions such as this one have still not gone far enough in their re-reading of Valle-Inclán's term in context.

I contend that, in the mouth of Dorio de Gadex, the term "garbancero" would not merely be neutralized--not intended as an insult to Galdós, delivered by a questionable voice--but, moreover, would be made to speak Valle-Inclán's truth indirectly. That is, if

[56] Luis Iglesias Feijoo, "Valle-Inclán y Galdós," Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea 6 (1981): 79-104.

Max, a poet of the people or a kind of natural genius on a national level, may hypothetically fill the shoes of Galdós, then the author as a garbancero would tend to carry the same value as a voice from Realism, coming into contact with Romantic genius within its own aesthetic traditions. It may well be, thus, that Valle-Inclán's "chickpea seller" was not necessarily meant to sell something common at all, but, more precisely, to serve as a bard telling the story or the commonplaces of a particular class (other than the upper class)--translating, moreover, the realistic and commonplace as art into a text rather than transforming it as an aestheticization. Even as these pages of Luces subscribe to an interpretation of Galdós as Spain's (meaning the people's) artist, they may reflect the politics suggested by Valle-Inclán who, in the same year he proffered said insult, also publicly denigrated his contemporaries' practice of formalistic or high art.[57] In this light, the above scene would likely point to an acknowledgment of Galdós's art, if not to a certain valorization of it as a more humanistic portrayal than achieved by the contemporaneous generation.

Examples of how the term might be read as less pejoratively descriptive may further be found by tracing its appearances and definitions in older period editions of the Real Academia Española's Diccionario de la lengua española, an authoritative publication. "Garbancero" here is defined as a relatively new coinage in Spain's accepted language. And its definition as refereeing to "what is ordinary or uncultured" is even more recent. The word first appears in an edition from 1914, some years before its appearance in Luces, and in the dictionary, it is defined quite simply or literally as "el que trata en garbanzos" and "el que vende torrados" ["one who deals in garbanzos" and "one

[57] Here I am referring to Valle-Inclán's well-known pronouncement in a 1920 interview "El Arte es un juego . . . . No debemos hacer Arte ahora, porque jugar en los tiempos que corren es immoral, es una canallada. Hay que lograr primero una justicia social" (qtd. in Brown 25), which rationalizes his art as culturally appropriate.

who sells toasted garbanzos"]. Consecutive editions maintain this definition as late as 1984. In this year, however, an additional figural use of the word appears "persona ordinaria y descortés" ["an ordinary or impolite person"], although in 1992 "decortés" is finally replaced by "vulgar" ["of the people" or "uneducated or uncultured"].[58] Taken in relation to evaluations of Galdós as a garbancero, this term's simple evolution may cast doubt on the assumption that Valle-Inclán's meaning is altogether depreciatory of his elder. The association I am making here must be considered as a reading specific to the time, or as real or authentic for the people of the time--even though it may still not be enough to concretize the comment overall as laudatory.[59] Valle-Inclán was not using a pejorative, according to period usage; only later critics--with later norms for the language--could be assumed to take it as such.

While Valle-Inclan's descriptor might actually have valorized Galdós (as simple-straightforward, as opposed to aesthete-elitist), this reading of his assessment would not permeate the critical mainstream. It, perhaps, painted the author's genius as a little too common for the new century's tastes. And a Galdós renewed by Modernists and inheritors of Modernism, who preferred to see literary genius in a more Romantic and creative light,[60] will consistently appear in the new century's criticism as juxtaposed with,

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[58] The above definitions come from "Garbancero," Diccionario de la lengua castellana por la Real Academia Española, 1914 ed.; "garbancero," Diccionario manual e ilustrado de la lengua española, 1984 ed.; "garbancero," Diccionario de la lengua española, 1992 ed., respectively. All of these editions are archived and accessible in full text on the Real Academia's website (<http://buscon.rae.es/ntlle/SrvltGUILoginNtlle>).

[59] Galdós's critic and biographer Pattison translates "garbancero" as "the grocer," in the context of the simple and even humble persona that Galdós projected publicly (i.e., in the eyes of young writers). Here another acknowledgement of the term's specificity to the period--of its author in his time--but not necessarily as any overly critical evaluation of him (Benito Pérez Galdós 14).

[60] Attesting to this critical phenomenon is Walter T. Pattison's acclaimed revisionist work Benito Pérez Galdós and the Creative Process (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1954). Here the critic is obliged to apologize for his depiction of the Galdós as a Realist using the artistic tools or "raw materials," qualified as nationalistic, from the environment or landscape of the artist's own Spain:

> I hope the reader does not feel I have destroyed or explained away the genius of Galdós. I hope he does not now look on Galdós as a 'derivative' author of secondary importance. The more light we shed on the

if not as opposed to, the Realist notion of the artist as poet of the people.[61] In this process of transfer or renovation/recuperation, the national context for the author of his period--the point of Valle-Inclán's critique--would be critically lost. While New Critics would not take up this lead, they would nonetheless chose to take on directly what Galdós seemed to make of himself, a Realist, and then, because of their preference for Romantic art and artists, see him as the worst incarnation of Valle-Inclán's depiction--as a garbancero.

Rewriting Galdós as Christian

History confirms my reading of this shift in critical evaluation, albeit indirectly. Valle-Inclán would, in fact, try to bring Galdós more commonly into perspective in 1920 as a poet of the people. New Critics rejecting this perspective later in the century--especially after the Civil War (1936-39)--would initiate an almost complete change of critical face for the novelist, pulling him away from the nationalist projects of Realism and evaluating him as transcendent, but in specific ways. In this period, overall agendas for a national cultural criticism would largely respond to conservative currents under the authoritarian dictator Francisco Franco (see my Introduction) that tended to vilify the

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creative process, the less mysterious it seems and the more the author is removed from the exalted superhuman plane and brought nearer to the normal human stature.

[I]f we were fortunate enough to have the necessary documents, I believe we could prove that almost every work of literature is made up, as far as raw material is concerned, in exactly the same way that Galdós proceeded. (138-39)

[61] Realism is understood here as a wider or emancipated representation of all levels of a social subject matter that loses sight of previous distinctions made between the beautiful and the ugly is informed by Erich Auerbach. In his ground-breaking study Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974), he points to an imitative or emerging Realist (novelistic) quality in literature termed, from the Greek, "mimesis." He considers Homer as standing in contrast to mimesis for the absence of the low but argues for a Realism in Homer that characteristically predates the classical separation of high and low genres or, for that matter, the rejection of these classical prescriptions. Considering Homer as Realist in this light and, as is critically common, considering Valle-Inclan's blind "poet of the people" Max Estrella to be a deformation of Homer (Smith 93), an extended correspondence of poets arises in the context of the scene I have described. That is, Valle-Inclán's "garbancero" or Galdós, a poet who himself went blind from surgery (Pattison, Benito Pérez Galdós 153), is suggested to be an even more dynamic and affirming representation of a national Realist artist of this sort.

author's anticlericalism as anti-Catholic.[62] For critics in expatriate and non-national contexts, liberal associations were more acceptable,[63] while a national scholarship in particular would be pressed to dispel these associations and to renovate Galdós's image. It is not surprising--but it is limiting in terms of socio-historical perspectives on the author--that many of the major voices who would look to re-position his work within a canon embodying an aesthetic of pure art on a European level (and in tacit resistance to an unacceptable regime) would also look to recuperate the author as transcending his national art and culture (e.g., Ricardo Gullón).[64] In this recuperation, the author's religious thematics or program in a nation self-defining as a new kind of sectarian or Roman Catholic entity would thus be reinterpreted as generally Christian rather than as referring to a national church. This shift will be well represented, from the late 1920s to the mid-1970s, in the approaches of Stephen Scatori, Ricard, Francisco Ruiz Ramón, and Francisco Pérez Gutiérrez.

Earlier scholarship in this grouping finds its bearings with Galdós by defining his program as mixture of ideologies. In, for example, Scatori's historically grounded reading La idea religiosa en la obra de Benito Pérez Galdós (1927),[65] the critic points to moments

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[62] My source here, John Devlin's Spanish Anticlericalism: A Study in Modern Alienation, (New York: Las Americas, 1966), surveys representations of anticlericalism in the work of Spanish liberal authors (e.g., Galdós), providing the twentieth-century socio-political debates that fueled these representations. In a final section, it provides a near primary account of the suppression of anticlerical sentiments and ideologies in the press and in the literary establishment under the Franco regime.

[63] As far as the expatriates are concerned, Zavala identifies the major critical voices, the markets in which they published, and the specifics of their critical agendas in regard to Galdós:

> [S]obre todo durante la guerra civil, volvió a suscitarse el interés por el gran novelista. Algunos de los liberales emigrados se interesaron por revalorizar su obra (valga recordar a Amado Alonso [1945] y Francisco Ayala [1959] en la Argentina; Ángel del Río [1953] en Nueva York, y Vicente Llorens en Princeton [1968]) justamente por su liberalismo, su sentido de la justicia y su repulsa por la vida política espanola vacía y retórica. A la cabeza de esta revalorización figura Joaquín Casalduero . . . [cuyo] libro se publió incialmente en Buenos Aires [1943]. (Romantisimo y realismo 463)

[64] Ricardo Gullón's Galdós, novelista moderno (Madrid: Taurus, 1987 [orig. pub. c.1960]) has been persistently influential in the argument that it makes for Galdós's artistic technique, ranking him as a European novelist (Percival, Galdós and His Critics 216-17). I will take up Gullón in regard to his commentary on Misericordia later in this chapter.

[65] Stephen Scatori, La idea religiosa en la obra de Benito Pérez Galdós (Toulouse: Édouard Privat, 1927).

of the novelist's anticlericalism and anti-Catholicism but, most notably, also to its strong anti-institutional bias and rejection of ecclesiastical dogma, which comes through in Galdós's non-avocation of the contemplative orders. Notwithstanding this portrayal, the critic will also find temperance in his subject's liberal and leftist sympathies within the more general spirit of Christianity.[66]

By contrast, in Ricard's polemical study L'Evolution spirituelle de Pérez Galdós (1959), there is already a rejection of the vision of Galdós as anticlerical yet not a continuation of Scatori's argument for the alternative thesis of Christianity, which could distinguish religious values from its institutions. What the later critic argues for, rather, is the author's conflicted Catholicism and, consistent with his predecessor, for his anti-Catholicism directed at the current institutions. While neither of these arguments would effectively reclaim the novelist's religious program in a national Spanish context, that is, in the face of the stigma of anti-Catholicism, both would nevertheless serve as impetuses for later criticism in bringing into focus Galdós's religiosity as more multifaceted, that is, balancing (anti)clerical, (anti-)Catholic, and Christian viewpoints, and hence reclaimable for many different political agendas, but not necessarily within his precise historical setting and its particular political challenges.

Later scholarship in this grouping portrays Galdós as less the social commentator or objector, as the novelist had earlier been known, than as engaging in a broader palette of spiritual debates about the church. In this portrayal, scholars are in fact historically indebted to Scatori's reading of the author as nonspecifically religious or as non-sectarian Christian (or not necessarily Catholic). Nonetheless, they refute Scatori as a whole, based

[66] "Para Galdós el cristianismo no consiste, pues, en dogmas, ni está encerrado en formulas, ni tampoco puede estar constituido por una simple declaración de fe. Su cristianismo no está en lo que declaramos creer, sino en la conducta, en los hechos, en el modo de llevar a la práctica el ideal de Jesús, sintiendo en la conciencia y en los actos las virtudes del Divino Maestro" (Scatori 122).

upon his openness to a spectrum of religious affinities and religious-philosophical critiques in Galdós--elements that might otherwise disqualify Galdós as a national author for a Catholic country. The critics who revised Scatori in this sense, namely Ruiz Ramón[67] and Pérez Gutiérrez, were specifically at pains to find a global thesis about the author's religious views that was not branded by older polemical ideologies (pro- or anti-Franco), and particularly not by anticlericalism (because of its historical-political offense to the church, which seemed too extreme for Galdós). In a coincidence of efforts, they argue instead for the presence of an ethical-religious ideology in Galdós's work that looks increasingly Christian, although more associated with the ideals or eternal values associated in general with Christ than with His figure directly.[68]

Ruiz Ramón will formulate his argument as an apology for Galdós's anticlericalism. In doing so, the critic does not reject so explicitly the historical

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[67] In his Tres personajes Galdosianos: ensayo de aproximación a un mundo religioso y moral (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1964), Francisco Ruiz Ramón demonstrates this scholarship's near fixation on dispelling the association of Galdós with anticlericalism in the cause of replacing it with an alternative religious vision:

> Actualmente, para un lector de buena fe, quiero decir, imparcial y recto de intención, la cuestión del anticlericalismo de Galdós carece de importancia; es más, no es tal cuestión. Sin embargo, tal anticlericalismo sigue funcionando como un tópico e impide en parte, como todo tópico, una visión sencilla y espontánea, no viciada de prejuicio, del pensamiento religioso de Galdós, problema éste mucho más apasionante y sustancial. (221-22)

[68] The pioneering work of Gustavo Correa, El simbolismo religioso en las novellas de Pérez Galdós (Madrid: Gredos, 1962), is also typical in this regard. He perceives Benina's ostensible narrative trajectory--her self-abnegating charitable work and love story with Almudena--as a road to (Christ-like or angelic) spiritual perfection. See, in particular, the chapter "La santificación por la caridad en Misericordia" (195-215) for a traditional discussion of the novel as an essentially moral-religious work. Here the critic reads Galdós's novelistic aesthetic as religious: "En la novelística de Galdós encontramos un mundo cuya inspiración es básicamente de índole religiosa. Tal característica se revela en sus preocupaciones fundamentales, en la peculiar conformación de los personajes, los cuales actúan dentro del ámbito de la conciencia religiosa y en los esquemas estructurales que dan forma y sentido a sus novelas" (33). He also presents the idea of religious conscience in Galdós overall:

> El culto a la conciencia es, por consiguiente, una de las caracteristicas mas constantes de la novela Galdósiana, y constituye el fondo en que se proyecta la dimensión moral de los personajes. . . . Por la conciencia, el hombre se aproxima más directamente a la Divinidad . . . La supremacía de este sentido interior define un ideal moral en el mundo Galdósiano que se halla caracterizado por una serie de cualidades fundamentales como la rectitude en el obrar, la pureza y sencillez de espíritu, la forteleza, la templanza y, por encima de todo, la caridad al projimo, que abarca los mas eximios valores de la persona humana. (251)

association of the author's work as much as he redefines the novelist's combative or socio-critical literature or his perceived confrontation of the church institution.[69] Redefining Galdós in this way would mean uncovering what for Ruiz Ramón is the "authentic antagonist"--not a class, an order, or an institution--but a general religious failure to consecrate professed faith with action.[70] Accounting for these failings, the critic thus interprets the author's overall religious program as a kind of endorsement for a more generalized expression of faith through action and, more specifically, Christ-like action that would not necessarily refer to any specific Catholic dogma or politics. As Ruiz Ramón notes, this program is manifested in Galdós's earlier works (which are most commonly considered anticlerical) as a critique of religious inauthenticity in bad clergy and in the author's later works by a representation of the virtue of religious authenticity in good clergy.[71] The critic thus offers more a thematic critique of individuals and their practice of faith rather than of the institutional church, propelling our vision of he novelist's program further toward abstract principles and away from the seemingly lesser goal of political critique--translating what might be recovered as history or politics into a moral conflict waiting to be critically anaesthetized.

Moving away from the former critic's purer formalism, Pérez Gutiérrez will gesture, albeit superficially, at Galdós's association with the concerns of his literary and

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[69] The traditional reputation of Galdós's work is, as Scatori states, a "literatura de combate" that served the free-thinking literary Generation of 1868, also known to be anti-Catholic (18-19). Galdós's "programa de combate," as conceived by Ruiz Ramón, is less historically precise (214-15).

[70] "Ahora bien, en ese mundo veía Galdós un mal capital, en lo que al plano estrictamente religioso se refiere: la inadecuación entre palabra y acción, entre actitud religiosa y virtudes cristianas. Ese mundo cansado de buenas palabras, de retórica, necesita hechos, ejemplos. No se trata de falta de fe ni de visión sentimental de la religión, sino de supervalidación de las virtudes activas del cristianismo" (Ruiz Ramón 265).

[71] The strategy of reading the negative portraits of clergyman as Christian propaganda appears earlier in Ricard's earlier study but, ironically, is an off-hand criticism of a moment of weak anticlericalism in Galdós. Referring to the workings of what has been seen as anticlerical in Casandra, Ricard remarks that the lesson seems rather to be a Christian one: "Les incrédules et les anticléricaux de Galdós passent leur temps à donner aux chrétiens des leçons de christianisme" (Ricard, L'Évolution spirituelle de Pérez Galdós 12-13).

historical period.[72] Notably, he employs the same historical frame to understand the author as does the earlier Scatori: the literary Generation of 1868. Notwithstanding this gesture toward historicity, the restoration of social relevancy to the novelist is by no means completed here, as the critic prefers to underscore the ethical-religious dimension of the author's work. Telltale is Pérez Gutiérrez's use of "post-Christian" and "post-Catholic" to characterize the novelist's religious program: "Hay, en efecto, en la dimensión de lo religioso en Galdós, mucho de contemporáneo, como un parentesco con nuestro hoy postconciliar y, si no 'postcristiano,' sí--incuestionablemente--'postcatólico'" (182). Even as these qualifications will bring the novelist into alignment with the later twentieth century, it is the very claim of ultra-modernity that devalues the political and social relevance of the simple reference to what is "Catholic" in the novelist's own age.

From Valle-Inclán to Pérez Gutiérrez, then, it becomes more apparent how the critical dialogue has shifted almost artificially away from the cultural-historical associations of the novelist's work. In terms of religion, the later thesis of Christianity (or post-Christianity) seems to have redressed the question of Catholicism as a cultural tradition (most fundamentally rooted in surrounding phenomena), reclaiming religion in the form of a set of aesthetic qualities, with little, if any, reference to the existing political and institutional references of the term for Spain. By approaching the author's work as these contemporary scholars have, that is, as abstractly religious or as a statement of humanist, vague and often conservative values, their accounts ultimately end, I contend, by revaluing Galdós as canonical for the Modernist generation (and thus as more than a nineteenth-century Realist), but only by undervaluing him simultaneously as a Catholic writer, as a Realist interested in his culture, and, most notably, as a social critic.

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[72] Francisco Pérez Gutiérrez, El problema religioso en la generación de 1868: "La leyenda de Dios" (Valera-Alarcón-Pereda-Pérez Galdós-"Clarín"-Pardo Bazán), (Madrid: Taurus, 1975).

The Advent of Misericordia as Galdós's "Spiritual Good Child"

As the critics' perspectives on the novelist shifted, so too has the critical dialogue on Misericordia as a novel, moving from what might have developed as a more culturally relevant reading toward a more formalist one. Initiated by a vanguard of scholars in the period surrounding the Civil War and into the mid-century, critical accounts of the novel take it to be a generalized social commentary, that is, a call for social and spiritual redemption but in a historically non-specified way, thus emphasizing "timeless" human values rather than sociopolitical concerns. As more modern critics would come to approach the work, they often found its emphasis on such values to be somewhat staid, with its supposedly problematic moralizing, which, they felt, put a distance between the values that it seemed to project and its cultural relevance. In time, the work would be classified as Galdós's religious masterpiece. It would also be qualified as the author's the most affirmatively Christian work (e.g., among Angel Guerra, Nazarín, and Halma; see below), as the author himself would be qualified as Christian--a kind of biographical fallacy to explain its Christianity away in newer, more generally philosophical terms. Below, I will briefly trace the argumentation of some of the major studies undertaken in this attempt to reclaim a moralizing novel for aesthetic purposes, namely, that of María Zambrano, Ruiz Ramón, Gullón, Robert H. Russell, and Pérez Gutiérrez.

An earlier generation of critics associates the humble beginnings of Misericordia as a noteworthy work engaging the long history of a difficult social climate in a modernizing Spain. Especially in the years surrounding the Civil War, critics would devote studies to hailing its artistic goal of national consolation and redemption, reading it as an ethical project with nationalist implications rather than a specifically sectarian

religious one.[73] In Zambrano's La España de Galdós, namely, the novel is evaluated as a kind of bridge in Spain's social history, which becomes readily apparent in its persistent treatment of the Galdós text--if not in the particular publishing history of Zambrano's own critical work, as she addressed the topic both in 1938 and then again in 1960. The later essay reprises her earlier one in re-evaluating the novel, as the critic portrays the worth of Misericordia as culturally twofold. It is both "timely" and "before its time" or, more specifically, representative of the needed redemption both for a spiritually depressed Spain acting in the shadow of its church in the author's time (see my Introduction) and, of greater interest to the critic, for the grim reality that was to come--for the social and spiritual stagnation after and since the War. In the interplay between the two accounts, though, the evaluation of the novel as "timely" or more socially referential will tend to be overshadowed by that of it as "before its time" or as somehow visionary, compelling the critic to question why it has not been taken as the very center of the Galdós canon: "Y que un mismo libro, que ni siquiera ha sido señalado como el más importante de su autor, esta blanca novela Misericordia" (from her 1960 preface, 11). In her extended re-evaluation of the work to follow, the critic will further call attention to the nineteenth-century novel's relevance to her 1960s present rather than to its role as a piece of Spain's cultural history. Her overall evaluation of the work will thus persist in becoming more plainly historically anachronistic.

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[73] In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the studies of María Zambrano, Angel del Río, and Casalduero treated Misericordia as an exemplar of societal salvation by spiritual hope, religiously inspired moral acts, and transcendent love (on a spiritual level), respectively. While originally published as journal articles, each of these early studies was later reprinted in what has now become a standard compilation of the respective critic's work on Misericordia or on Galdós. For Zambrano, see her La España de Galdós. 2a ed., (Madrid: Taurus, 1981). For Río, see "Aspectos del pensamiento moral de Galdós," Cuadernos Americanos 12.6 (1943): 147-68, a series of essays previously published separately on the novelist, and also his Estudios Galdósianos (Zaragoza: Biblioteca del Hispanista, 1953). For Casalduero, see his "Significado y forma de Misericordia," Vida y obra de Galdós and, also, his "Galdós: de Morton a Almudena," MLN 79.2 (Mar. 1964): 181-87, in which the critic extends his interpretation of Misericordia to that of a spiritual or Utopic resolution in a thematic progression in Galdós overall.

Peaking early as a poignant national commentary, Misericordia would be slower to achieve acclaim as one of Galdós's more timeless religious works. In later critics' accounts, the novel would appear in competing evaluations and comparisons, often with what are considered its sister works, that is, Ángel Guerra (1890-91), Narazín (1895), and Halma (1895)--all purportedly coming from the author's same artistic resurgence in the final years of the century.[74] Notably, these works, including Misericordia, had traditionally been considered as richer overall in religious content than in aesthetics.[75] Yet tradition would not stop Ruiz Ramón, for example, from recalling this content as praiseworthy in the sense of representing good Christian clerics (here also dispelling older concerns of anticlericalism). Moreover, this critic would come to take Nazarín and Halma's good but misapprehended cleric, the title character, Nazarín, as a most salient representation of a Christ figure (174-208). Misericordia's unexpected laywoman heroine would not meet this standard, and so the novel's religious content doubly marginalized it. Not yet having been accepted on an aesthetic level, as none of its sisters was, this novel was now slated to be the less worthy religious text of the group.

Critical moves tried to intervene in the shape this debate took, casting Misericordia as the "ugly sister"; they would not only claim equal standing for this text but also would argue for its predominance, both in terms of aesthetics and content. Addressing the former, Gullón's work would designate the earlier novels as dress rehearsals and thus would claim Misericordia as the real work of art or the more mature

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[74] E.g., Pérez Gutiérrez in his notes that Nazarín, Halma, and Misericordia, along with Ángel Guerra, have been regarded as the height of Galdós's spiritual novels--traditionally exemplifying the author's conception of mysticism but, for the critic, constituting an explication of the meaning of religious authenticity (246-47).

[75] Ruiz Ramón makes reference to the critical tradition: "Todos los críticos de Galdós están de acuerdo en afirmar que Nazarín es una novela fallida; que al autor se le fue de las manos un gran tema por exceso de afán simbolizador . . ." (174).

statement of Galdós's program.[76] Gullón would also find it necessary, perhaps for the purpose of cutting through the critical murkiness into which the novel had fallen, to re-introduce the center of interest of the piece, its protagonist, Benina:

> Durante varios años Galdós estuvo tanteando, probando sus fuerzas, como el pianista antes de iniciar al ejecución de una pieza difícil adiestra y flexibiliza los dedos con ejercicios extensos y complicados; en Nazarín, en Halma, incluso en Ángel Guerra, aunque ésta sea excelente novela en cuanto al tema de la conversión religiosa, Galdós procura hallar el personaje capaz de personificar la caridad. Ese personaje se llama Benina, y es la protagonista de Misericordia. (98)[77]

As the critic suggests here, Benina is a narrative figure reflecting the author's artistic development, becoming what the other protagonists do not--a finished expression of charity. Later in the study, Gullón will link the character's given name "Benigna" (which drops the more conventional "g") as a discrete biblical reference or narrative symbolism of the "benign," which he connects to a passage on charity in St. Paul's 1 Corinthians. Finding in this way a new in-road for judging the artistic worth of a religious text, the previously shelved Misericordia, would begin to acquire foothold within the New Critical canon, revived by supported artistry represented in its heroine. At the same time, the novel shed its residual promise of or claim to offering insight as a cultural-historical narrative. That is, while the older, mid-century reading had still been far from claming a genuine social relevance for the text (claiming it as redemptive), it would certainly have come closer to it than would this new variant, which stressed its ethical or humanist-Christian values as key to its aesthetics.

As consensus about the novel's artistic or aesthetic worth would grow, criticism would at the same time become less apt to question its prominence among the competing

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[76] In Gullón, see his short section "La caridad" that treats Misericordia specifically.

[77] Gullón's distinction among the works also suggests his implicit response to Valle-Inclan's portrayal of Galdós's art as popular, which Gullón sees as a higher art. Here the metaphor of peddling garbanzo beans is replaced with that of pedaling a musical instrument.

sister texts or even to rehearse its critical résumé.[78] Nevertheless, debates still came to a head in comparing these works' religious content and in judging their artistic success or failure. Russell's work in this regard would be transformative for Misericordia. Making a direct challenge to the claim that Nazarín and Halma consummately represented a figuration of Christ, the critic would extend a standard critique of that reading--that the figuration was in fact over-determined or programmatic--to a more directly religious critique of the protagonists Nazarín and Benina. Looking at them as embodying the life of Christ, he makes the case that the more genuine or artistic representation--the most successful artistic creation--would portray a most unconscious acceptance of a higher vocation, just as Christ submitted to His Father's will and not his own. By this measure, Benina, an unexpected and rather unsuspecting heroine, will enable Russell to draw out his argument about the figure:

> The values of the Gospel [in Misericordia], positively conceived, are not laid out upon a hero or suggested mechanically by events. They arise from within the novel and from within the heroine. The real key to Misericordia's successful artistic elaboration is the ironic fact that Benina does not ever know that she is a Christ figure. . . . In Benina Galdós has created a figura evangélica who is neither a self-conscious Christ figure nor a holy experimenter. She is, unlike Nazarín and Halma, a person to whom the question of how to be never presents itself. (51)

Here, notably, the critic perceives Benina not just as a skilled representation in the abstract, the symbol of an isolated moral value, but now also as a skilled representation of a religious figure whose story becomes interwoven and extended into the network of the narrative itself--making the latter reading potentially more cultural and less strictly abstract-formalist (albeit not as cultural as claiming Benina as part of Spain's sectarian

[78] In his "The Christ Figure in Misericordia," The Christ Figure in the Novels of Pérez Galdós, ed. R. Cardona and A. N. Zahareas (New York: Las Americas, 1967) 51-78; Robert Russell is confident enough in this regard to begin his study with the following: "It would be idle to assemble previous critical judgments testifying to the artistic achievement of Misericordia: everyone who writes about it has been won by its superior artistic qualities" (51).

faith or as Catholic). Culture itself, of course, or any attempt to locate Galdós's work too near to period-specific ideologies, was the old adversary of these New Critics, and so the Russell's Christian reading provide a suitable solution to the problem of abstraction by adding the assumption that the novel's art was in the representation of a larger world. The critic was, it seems, successful in making this graft. And, coupled with the reputation of artistry that Gullón claimed for the text, it would be these rich religious thematics in the high aesthetic form claimed by this critic that would carry Misericordia into the next decade as a new Christian poster child.

As the bulk of a scholarship surrounding the 1970s would continue to focus on the novel as the exposition of an artistically heightened religious thematics, it would do so only in variants of these earlier strategies. Notable among critical voices in this period are Gilberto Paolini (1968),[79] J. E. Varey (1970),[80] and Pérez Gutiérrez (1975) all of whom would take the novel's central theme to be, as Gullón pinpoints, charity. Yet while Paolini conceives of charity in all its aspects (theological, philosophical, etc.), Pérez Gutiérrez explicitly revisits Benina's charity as a reflection of St. Paul's.[81] Others would be informed by Gullón's method of using biblical sources as a means of discovering meaningful passages or symbols in Misericordia. For instance, Schraibman ("Las citas bíblicas en Misericordia" 1970-71)[82] finds a large enough breath of scriptural passages referenced in Misericordia to justify his perception of "la amplitud del conocimiento bíblico del autor y su sentido de la unidad total de las escrituras sagradas" (490)--thus

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[79] Gilberto Paolini, "The Benefactor in the Novels of Galdós," Revista de estudios hispánicos 2.2 (nov. 1968): 241-49.

[80] J. E. Varey, "Charity in Misericordia," Galdós Studies I, Ed. J. E. Varey and Robert J. Weber (London: Tamesis, 1970) 164-94.

[81] "Como se ha observado con exactitud, Benina encarna la clarividencia de la vision evangélica del mundo y, sobre todo, la caridad . . . . Ricardo Gullón ve en la descripción paulina de la caridad (I Corintios, 13, 1-13) la clave de Misericordia" (Pérez Gutiérrez 252).

[82] José Schraibman, "Las citas bíblicas en Misericordia, de Galdós," Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos 250-52 (1970-71): 490-504.

establishing one of the tools of New Criticism's creative genius in the composition of this text to be, again, almost unexpectedly fundamental and enduring.

Many other notable accounts of this important decade for the text characterize the novel as globally Christian, in a reprise of Russell. For instance, Theodore S. Beardsley (1970)[83] parallels Benina's narrative trajectory with the life of Christ, and J. Sinnigen (1978)[84] interprets her as the abstract expression of Christ's teachings. Accepting the Christian approach to the novel, but not as globally, Robert Kirsner (1970)[85] and Schraibman ("El ecumenismo de Galdós" 1970)[86] both elucidate Benina in terms of thematic dualities (i.e., saint / sinner, vice / virtue) that suggest, respectively, the ironic tension and play of a "comedia humana" and the philosophy of Christian synthesis (both readings structured with underlying formalist aesthetics). Approaching the novel as more generally religious, Sara E. Schyfter (1978)[87] reads Judaism and Christianity both as its central ideological principles--yet with the Jewish faith personified in the character of Almudena as revealing the comparative inauthenticity of the Christian one. Culminating the proliferating acclaim for the text, Pérez Gutiérrez contributes and important religious approach to Galdós when he praises the work as the aesthetic and now religious highpoint or masterpiece: "Misericorida, una de las cimas literarias, y desde luego la última cumbre religiosa de Galdós . . ." (252). With respect to Zambrano's original concern for the text's

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[83] Theodore S. Beardsley Jr., "The Life and Passion of Christ in Galdós' Misericordia," Homenaje a Sherman H. Eoff, ed. José Schraibman (Madrid: Castalia, 1970) 39-58.
[84] J. Sinnigen, "The Search for a New Totality in Nazarín, Halma, Misericordia," MLN 93.2 (Mar. 1978): 233-51.
[85] Robert Kirsner, "La ironía del bien en Misericordia," Actas del tercer congreso internacional de hispanistas. Ed. Carlos H. Magis, et al. (México: El Colegio de México, 1970) 495-99.
[86] José Schraibman, "El ecumenismo de Galdós," Hispania 53.4 (Dec. 1970): 881-86.
[87] Sara E. Schyfter, The Jew in the Novels of Benito Pérez Galdós (London: Tamesis, 1978). See, particularly, her chapter "Almudena and the Jewish Theme in Misericordia."

critical dormancy, here would be found the mature harvest of an altogether new admiration.[88]

An even more recent turn of critical focus for Misericordia, although certainly less global, is contained in certain suggestive readings from the end of the twentieth century that have begun to retrieve figures from Spain's popular religious culture. As case in point, Harry L. Kirby (1983)[89] points to references to Catholic saints that occur in the novel, finding iconographic parallels between the beggar Benina "de Casia" and St. Rita of Cascia, an Augustinian nun, and between the local parish priest Don Romualdo and St. Romuald, the founder of the Order of the Camaldolese. Here, while acknowledging Galdós's recourse to specific aspects of organized Catholicism rather than to a mere humanistic Christianity, the critic will nevertheless undervalue the novelist's strategies in recalling such figures as semantic tools in support of a Realist agenda. Such critiques take the further step of envisioning the meaning of such Catholic tenets within a Catholic country's culture, society, and, what is more, politics. Nonetheless, this critique still does not move beyond recovering the work as the critics' good child, passing over more charged reference contained in the religious references. Galdós's novel remains too good and self-referentially moralistic, as the work of an old anticlerical author (even New Criticism's reformed one).

Like author, like child: both Galdós and Misericordia remain today in mainstream criticism of the Spanish novel largely as they were molded by critical agendas that came into vogue in the middle of the last century. Rescued, according to the critics, from their sordid pasts as historically realistic in feature, they were reclaimed almost simultaneously

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[88] An exception to the consensus of the novel as religious is Donald W. Bleznick and Mario E. Ruiz's "La Benina misericordiosa: conciliación entre la filosofía y la fe," Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos 250-52 (1970): 472-89, in which the explanation of Christianity is seen as limiting and less precisely descriptive than as religious humanism.

[89] Harry L. Kirby, Jr., "Religious Symbolism in the Characterizations of Benina and Don Romualdo in Misericordia," Anales Galdosianos 18 (1983): 97-109.

within a dual rhetoric stressing the relation of high art and good, Christian, and transcendent values appealing to audiences. At the same time, these essentially partial readings of the novel are unstable, making it a tool by which scholars would stake their claim on the author in terms of their personal value structures as critics.[90] Re-evaluated by aesthetic and canonical standards essentially as understood by New Critics, readings of the novel remain largely biased towards an aestheticism of the ultra-modern, leaving the novel to be evaluated as praiseworthy but often rather innocuous.

More specifically, the religious masterpiece now appears in standard accounts as the novelist's good (Christian) child, with Christian dogmas or abstract religious values or signifiers attached to it, but with the signifieds of the cultural-religious history behind them largely hidden.[91] Similarly, the author, aligned with a new Christianity and transcendence (where in his lifetime he was known as a social critic) now sits distanced from the more profound representation of the human and political imperatives that he had claimed for himself. In this sense, this story of critical reappropriations of author and text--as many are--has been a tale of the loss of artistic nationalism, as well as of the

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[90] N.B., in the case of the novel, José Luis Mora García's Hombre, sociedad y religión en la novelística galdosiana (1888-1905) (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1981) has already begun to call the acknowledged religious masterpiece into question, asserting in a subtle descriptive phrase that in Misericordia the religious novel in Galdós "desciende con suavidad" (15).

[91] In an essay "T. S. Eliot" of Litz, Menand, and Rainey's work, Menand remarks that late-nineteenth / mid-twentieth century American poet and critic Eliot (ironically) did not ascribe a religious function to literature as did his Modernist contemporaries, for whom "the aesthetic experience proposed itself as a substitute for the religious experience." He adds that Eliot, at Modernism's initiations, saw the confusion of literature's aesthetics with religion as a "central failing of modern thought" (54). Writing at the outer historical limit of the New Critical period (1967), Miller also attests to the modern feature and failure of this kind of religious aestheticization:

> It is so easy to see why it is that the relations of religion and literature are now of special concern. In a time when the power of organized religion has weakened, people have turned, as Matthew Arnold said they would, to poetry as a stay and prop, even as a means of salvation. . . .
>
> Arnold, however, was wrong, and T. S. Eliot was right. Literature is not a means of salvation. (114)

As Eliot and Miller recognize poetry or literature more generally with, e.g., its symbols, metaphor, allegory, as having substituted (however poorly) for modernity's spiritual voice, they imply a loss of depth of religious culture not only from the perspective of spiritualism but from within literary studies, where, as I will argue, the interpretation of a religious symbol--without the cultural background--can only be taken so far.

traces of national religious, social, literary, and political ideologies that could represent the Spanish nation. It is the tale of the loss of more subtly progressive and critical currents of Realism in the face of the compelling abstract-humanistic interpretations more favored by twentieth-century critics' frequent stress on aesthetics.

Towards Reclaiming the Realist and his Work

In light of such historical reductionism by critics, I will in the next chapters re-engage a discussion of the novel as historical and political. I will do so by re-associating the author's aesthetics--drawn from the reservoirs of a Catholic religious imaginary as known in his contemporaneous Spain--with their possible referents in his era's cultural politics. To make clear how pervasive Galdós's recourse to the Catholic imaginary of his era was, each of the following three chapters will read the novel out of one of the cultural archives outlined in the introduction to this project. Thus, I will approach Misericordia three times, piecemeal, to trace how it provides its readership with a complex network of references drawn religious culture--religious themes, motifs, and materials readily identifiable within the popular sphere.

My goal is to reaffirm Galdós's own claim that the novel is Realist, but in a different way than earlier critics have--I will pursue his use of cultural-religious tropes and figures as potential stimuli for his audience to engage in social-political criticism and modernization. These analyses, further, point toward a more general re-reading of Galdós, taking the position that the author's Realism was directed very concretely at a readership enmeshed in the world of a politically active Catholic church. His artistry was not necessarily directed toward the creation of a utopian vision, nor for moralizing in any absolute sense, nor simply for proving his mettle as creative. Instead, if read more carefully from positions within the Catholic imaginary of a contemporaneous Spain, the

author can be shown to use these religious materials in order to speak both realistically and politically.

Chapter Two:

Almudena as Catholic Patron for a Syncretic Spain

In the previous critical review chapter, I presented a scholarship that in the wake of Spanish Modernism was at pains to re-evaluate the Realist Galdós, reading the religious content of his work as specific to aesthetic goals and, moreover, reading Misericordia's Almudena as one of the most enduring manifestations of that aestheticism. In this chapter, I supplant this interpretation, re-claiming a cultural-historical approach to the character, who in this aestheticizing standardization has been rejected as artistically base or provincial.

To do so, I will confront this scholarship's forced refusal to read Almudena in context, particularly in scholarly discussions of the novel's ethnic-religious cultures and faiths (mainly Semitic) that Almudena himself recalls. Proposing a new look at what critics have now classified as a Semitic figure, I will then re-introduce a critically forgotten cultural element of Almudena's identity: a non-Semitic reference, the character's association with the Madrid patron, Our Lady of the Almudena, one of the many cultural figurations or devotional renamings of the Virgin Mary. Notably, I will consider this symbolic association through the lens of religious iconography, as my Introduction suggests, drawing here from the details or associations of the Madrid Virgin (within a Catholic religious imaginary) and, moreover, recovering her as a national-historical emblem, used to communicate in an implicit dialogue with its readership.

While I will unfold how Catholic aspects of Almudena's iconographic references may re-root him in a religious culture particular to Galdós's Spain, I will not however outright reject prior claims about his Semitic identity. Rather, I will interpret the character as a more full-spectrumed ethno-religious representation. This re-interpretation will, to the degree possible, factor in the contemporaneous perspective of the work's original readership as the author staged that character in a subtle sequencing of its narrative revelations. In this light, I contend, Almudena would have appealed first and most commonly to a Madrid-Catholic readership as the figuration of their Virgin. From here, however, this figuration would then be unfolded and revised for this same readership, re-making the local patron as multi-ethnic, namely, by the novelist's recalling of familiar stereotypes from the marginally Spanish-Catholic and the less centrally Catholic cultural groups of his era (e.g., colonial outposts and surrounding religious badland terrains of the time and Old Testament or Jewish prophets). As Galdós transforms or deconstructs this Virgin, a now more three-dimensioned syncretic Almudena will emerge in the narrative as a national critical reminder of historical roots and ethnicity. The extent of this narrative critique will be extended still further as I address its timeliness within the contemporary circumstances--including the Virgin's physical representation as an icon or statue in the Madrid Cathedral and the century's larger polemics on Mary.

The Critics' Almudena, From Syncretic to Exclusionary

While standard approaches to the Almudena that appears in the previous chapter have taken the character as transcending any physical or cultural environment (and, by

extension, as showing the author moving beyond the Realism he claimed),[92] such critical accounts will for the most part continue in this vein in discussing his appearance in the extended narrative. Earlier accounts, as we have seen, have tended to read the character as a syncretic figure, both as the semblance of a Jew, Christian, and Muslim, or as Semitic only. Later accounts have alternatively tended to transform him into a more nation-specific figure (a Spanish Jew or Catholic) but at the cost of excluding his other religious faces. To make this case, I address these trends below as representing reading strategies that undervalue Galdós's achievement; my principle points of reference will again be the contributions of Casalduero, Ricard, Schyfter, and Vernon A. Chamberlin.

Reconsidering Galdós as a leading international novelist but also as a less characteristically Spanish one, Casalduero's commentary on Misericordia and its blind beggar overall considers the art as almost identical with the artist. The critic thus reads the Realist element of Almudena's ethnic and religious diversity (Judaic, Christian, Islamic) as he believes Galdós would have claimed it. He theoretically elides their historical references as competing monotheisms and to instead stress more general spiritual paradigms, namely, the higher moral values of human and religious love. For Casalduero, the author aims in the novel to resolve universal conflicts, ostensibly by espousing a spiritual-ethical transcendence of more than local appeal.[93] In this claim, moreover, the critic rejects any consideration of Almudena's metaphorical ground as

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[92] In my critical review chapter, I introduced this foundational scholarship, namely as represented by Casalduero, "Significado y forma de Misericordia," Vida y obra de Galdós; Ricard, "Sur le Personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Galdós et ses romans; and Lida, "De Almudena y su lenguaje"

[93] "Almudena . . . ya no se espresa un amor burgués y doméstico en un mundo comercial e industrial, sino un amor eterno en la llanura ardiente de Castilla, en donde Galdós consigue reducir las tres religiones--cada una monoteísta, pero que niega la autenticidad de la otras--a una sola: 'No haber más que un Dios, uno solo, solo El,' proclama el ciego Almudena, mientras encuentra la solución que Morton y Gloria no encontraron: 'Casarnos por arreligión tuya, por arreligión mía . . . , quierer tú . . . , veder tú sepolcro; entrar mí S'nagoga rezar Adonai (Casalduero, "Significado y forma de Misericordia," Vida y obra de Galdós 232).

evoking the real historical territory that during the Spanish Reconquest[94] these three religions shared:

> [L]a lengua del ciego árabe-judío-cristiano fue un hallazgo que le permitió Galdós der [sic] forma a su conflicto, que dicho sea de paso nada tiene que ver con que hayan convivido en España durante la Edad Media las tres religiones. Se trata de ir más allá de esos tres aspectos de la personalidad del ciego, de esas tres formas de monoteísmo . . . . ("Galdós: de Morton a Almudena" 187)

In such a move, the critic reduces the real historical tensions among these religious traditions to recover instead a common theism, the love of (one) God. This reduction in turn limits a potentially compelling socio-cultural commentary reducing it to the status of a romance or a culturally and historically whitewashed idealism. Not surprisingly, Casalduero will conclude his interpretation of this romance by staking claim to Misericordia as Utopian ("Galdós: de Morton a Almudena" 187). As his Almudena will be symbolic of ideals then, and not of historical circumstance, within that Utopia, I claim, the critique ultimately loses Almudena as a cultural signifier.

Much as Casalduero transitions Almudena out of an accessible reality and into a context of universals, Ricard argues for the character as representing a symbolic transcendence. This latter critic finds narrative clues that characterize Almudena as a

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[94] Two defining moments in the early history of Spain are the Moorish Conquest in the eighth century of the Iberian Peninsular, or the landmass its shares with Portugal, and the Reconquest of that territory through the late medieval period (c.1492) by Germanic Christian kingdoms, unified under Isabel of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon. The long period of the Reconquest, which encompassed the mass immigration of erudite Arabs and Jews to Castile in the late thirteenth century, is commonly accepted as having born a phenomenon of cultural integration of faiths and traditions, in the face of and despite political struggles. To read on aspects of the cultural impact of the Moorish conquest and on the origins of Spanish culture as the modern mixture of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, see the impressions of John A. Crow in a chapter "The Cross, the Crescent, and the Star" of his social history Spain: The Root and the Flower: An Interpretation of Spain and the Spanish People (3rd ed., expanded and updated, Berkeley: U of California P, 1985). For a more in-depth socio-political approach, see Stanley G. Payne's A History of Spain and Portugal, vol. 1 (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1973). For dates and an overall history of the period in a handbook reference on Spain, see Richard Hitchcock's chapter "Muslim Spain (711-1492)" in Spain: A Companion to Spanish Studies, ed. P. E. Russell (New York: Methuen, 1985).

contrived ethnic composite, free-floating between Judaic and Islamic religion and language:

> Pour moi, c'est donc une poésie parfaitement consciente qui a conduit Galdós à transformer l'aveugle marocain en un personnage incohérent où le vrai s'allie à l'invraisemblable et dont la religión flotte entre l'islam et le judaïsme, comme sa langue flotte entre un espagnol moderne incorrect et grossier, le castillan archaïque de ses lointains ancêtres et l'arabe vulgaire qui demeure son idiome habituel et courant. ("Sur le Personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Galdós et ses romans 60-61)

And as will be evident in this passage, Ricard has not entirely denied that Casalduero's generalized Western religious type may also recall a more precise Spanish version of these religious traditions. Echoed in the qualifiers of the critic's mention of Almudena's Castilian as "archaique de ses lotains ancestres" is an earlier implication that the character refers to a Spanish stereotype of long historical and literary appearance, that is, the nation-less or wandering Jew. As the critic reads it, this figure or type will reappear in this novel, namely, evoked when Almudena recites Hebrew prayers in fifteenth-century Old Spanish. The figure thus appears here as more specifically representative of the archaic but nonetheless preserved Judeo-Spanish community of the Sephardim ("Sur le Personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Galdós et ses romans 59).[95] While providing this entry point into the detail of Almudena's cultural background (and Spain's), Ricard nonetheless will not continue to re-claim the character from the overly aestheticized approach of his critical predecessor and into that of a potential Spanish social realism.

For example, despite pointing to that second side of Almudena as informed by Galdós's political leanings in favor of a pro-Sephardic diplomacy, Ricard will still come

[95] The Sephardim or Sephardic Jews are an ethno-religious population descended from North African Jews who were expelled from Spain at the end of the period of the Reconquest (1492). My source here is "Sephardi," Encyclopædia Britannica Online, 2005, Encyclopædia Britannica, 30 May 2005 <http://search.eb.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/>.

to politically limited (or apolitical) conclusions. He will interpret these references in the Almudena figure not as a barometer for social implication, but as a symbol of artificial and exotic ethnic-religious variation (i.e., Semitism or a more general religious syncretism), and as symbolizing an inherent tolerance of differences. While thus taking the figure as a simulacrum of religious tolerance, Ricard might further have developed a commentary on the traces of historical prejudice particular to a Spanish Catholic public or readership of the nineteenth century. He does after all pursue his insight that the character's racially dismissive nickname "el moro" or "el ciego moro" ["the Moor" or "the blind Moor"][96] recreates the perspective of a Christian public dismissively using the general term to refer to any non-Christian rather than identifying more specific Semitic references of the text and distinguishing, as it ought, between a Muslim and a Jew.[97] But for Ricard, the public that Galdós portrays here will necessarily remain detached from any more precise background story or extratextual history (e.g., Spain's historically documented anti-Semitism). Preferring again a Galdós who transcends cultural and religious differences, this critic's notion of tolerance will thus stop at taking Almudena's abstract ethnic body as a symbol where a kind of mixed marriage of religions and races will co-exist within itself.

Standing in contrast to the reductive theism in Casalduero and to the a-historical Semitic tolerance in Ricard, Almudena is treated in Schyfter as an artistic expression of the Jewish nation, considered now to be a dominant thematic in Misericordia. More specifically, this critic will pursue the idea of a Jewish Almudena as an instrument of

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[96] From the perspective of Spanish history, the Moors or North African Muslim Arabs are perhaps the most infamous aggressors and unwelcome cohabitants of Iberian Peninsular. Again, see Crow's "The Cross, the Crescent, and the Star" in his Spain: The Root and the Flower, Payne's A History of Spain and Portugal, and Hitchcock's "Muslim Spain (711-1492)" in Spain: A Companion to Spanish Studies.

[97] "Galdós persiste néanmoins à l'appeler el moro, el ciego moro, mais il ne fait ici que refléter l'opinion de ses autres personnages, incapables en l'ocurrence de distinguer un Juif et un Musulman" (Ricard, "Sur le Personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Galdós et ses romans 58).

cultural critique, both recreating and confronting the ethnic-religious intolerances of Christendom. Appearing in the narrative at first as a stereotyped figure specific to a Christian community, that is, as sorcerer, moneylender, or devil dealer (92-95), Almudena later, according to Schyfter, will counter these stereotypes by ethically outshining his Christian neighbors and, as she also notes, by subtly transitioning his practice of faith from the stereotypically Jewish to the more traditional (namely, in the Mount Sinai scene; 96-97). As the novel will distinguish Almudena as a truly charitable and pious Jew, the critic will thus read it as a commentary on tolerance. That is, as Almudena fraternizes with Benina, a true Christian who shares his style of self-abnegating charity, this pair of mendicants will come to portray a reconciliation of religious or, rather, spiritual ideals (87-88, 100).

Even while using a kind of religious diplomacy as a guide to interpretation, however, Schyfter will short other implications of the novel's Christian references, as even Benina here will be eventually explored as a Jewish motif, rather than as part of a Catholic history:

> Is it not, therefore, possible that Benina, the true Christian, represents in Misericordia the beginning of the fulfillment of the Messianic time and of the promised return to Jerusalem? . . .
>
> The entire context of her ascent to Mount Sinai is given in an overwhelmingly Jewish mystical setting, one that possibly alludes not only to the liturgy of the Sabbath, but even to the traditional Sabbath meal, which may be symbolized in the fact that Benina and Almudena eat atop Mount Sinai. (97)

Taking the text as the enunciation or anticipation of a Jewish prophecy, this commentary fuses the novel's two accomplices (representative of diverse religious poles) into the iconography of a single tradition. Taking Almudena's ethnic-religious history further than any of her critical predecessors by showing specific interventions of Jewish ritual and liturgy in the text, Schyfter is indeed conscious of correcting historical religious

prejudices that come from a lack of cultural perspective. Nonetheless, in looking exclusively through the Jewish lens, she essentially writes off another viable cultural-historical parallel to the novel's rich Catholic symbolism.

Unlike Schyfter, Chamberlin will not limit his commentary to the narrative's Jewish element, but he will choose to plant Almudena exclusively in the opposite religious camp.[98] Decoding the character now within a Catholic iconography, Chamberlin finds a Spanish-Catholic metaphor within the blind beggar's own name and then connects that name to a cultural signified.[99] He argues that the figure does not explicitly refer to situations within the text but rather to ones familiar to a Madrid readership, so familiar in fact as not requiring explanation ("The Significance of the Name Almudena in Galdós' Misericordia" 491). That is, both the Virgin Mary or the city's patron and the central cathedral dedicated to her were (and still are) regionally known by the name "Almudena"--"Nuestra Señora de la Almudena" or "Our Lady of the Almudena" most often for the Virgin, and "Santa María la Real de la Almudena" for the cathedral.[100] Pursuing this provocative religious allusion, Chamberlin comes to link Almudena's

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[98] Chamberlin has commented widely on the character, interpreting him as representative of a range of socio-political stances in Galdós from a censure of institutional Catholicism (in the manner of an iconoclast) to an embrace of the Sephardim. In the analysis that follows in my text, I will focus on the former. For Catholic censure and associated interpretations, see his "Galdós' Use of Yellow in Character Delineation" and "The Significance of the Name Almudena in Galdós' Misericordia." For Sephardic interpretations, see his "Galdós' Sephardic Types" and "Galdós and the Movimiento Pro-Sefardita."

[99] As part of scholarship's recuperation of Galdós as a creative writer, names in the author's work were treated as proof positive of that claim. Notably, Chamberlin remarks in a study on Almudena that "the names Galdós gave to his characters were not incidental tags, but carefully chosen appellations designed to reflect essential attributes of the character and frequently to carry additional symbolic connotations as well" ("The Significance of the Name Almudena in Galdós' Misericordia" 491). For other such treatments in Galdós more generally, see, for example, Chamberlin's "Galdós' Sephardic Types" and W. H. Shoemaker's "Galdós' Literary Creativity: D. José Ido del Sagrario," Hispanic Review 19.3 (July 1951): 204-37.

[100] "Since 1085, citizens of Madrid have honored the Virgin as their patron under the name Nuestra Señora de la Almudena. . . derived from Almudit or granary. . . . And "the 'Almudena,' the cathedral of the patron of Madrid . . . [m]ore than any other church in Madrid, it is the traditional and official spiritual center of the city. It not only marks the spot where the first place of worship was erected in Madrid, but it has also traditionally housed the sanctuary where rulers of the city and later those of modern Spain attended services . . ." (Chamberlin, "The Significance of the Name Almudena in Galdós' Misericordia" 491-92).

narrative background story to the architectural and religious history of the cathedral that is his namesake. In this reading specifically, the character's free-floating religious identity--transitioning as it does from Jew to perceivable Muslim to baptized Christian (in an imperfect layering)--is said to parallel the religious monument's own history of shifting religious orientations--beginning in its earliest existence as a synagogue, being converted into mosque, and finally in the years surrounding the Reconquest reshaped again into cathedral.[101] Within this religious-architectural metaphor, Chamberlin's Almudena emerges as the embodiment of the official Catholic institution at odds with the vision of the more authentic Christianity epitomized by Benina, as she has been traditionally evaluated.[102]

While Chamberlin has resisted a scholarship that tends to remove Almudena from the context of Spanish regionalism, his relatively early attempt at historicizing and contextualizing the narrative's religious references still does not reconcile his narrative close reading with the precise historical moment. On a narrative level, Almudena as representation of this formal Catholic structure or institution would become problematic in considering Benina, Chamberlin's touted spirit of the faith, as able to restore her

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[101] "[B]oth are of Jewish descent; acquiring, at a particular moment, a more Muslim feature; and, at last, undergoing a conversion to Christianity . . . [the cathedral] was the principal Moslem mosque of the city at the time of the Reconquest. If not the actual brick and mortar descendant of the earlier Jewish synagogue (as some claim), it was, of course, the spiritual descendant of Judaism. . . . [A] parallel in the personal history of Galdós' character Almudena . . . [h]e was born of Jewish parents, given the Hebrew name Mordejai, and learned the rudiments of Judaism. He next acquired some aspects of the Islamic religion, is considered a Moslem by some Galdosian characters" (Chamberlin, "The Significance of the Name Almudena in Galdós' Misericordia" 492).

[102] This evaluation of Almudena in all its aspects comes across mainly in two of the critic's studies. Most specifically, as Chamberlin points to the Galdós's use of symbolism to get across meaning, Almudena's yellow complexion becomes determinant of him as a pejorative embodiment. "Galdós," Chamberlin clarifies, "from the beginning of his career, held yellow to be an important and useful color for delineating antipathetic characters" ("Galdós' Use of Yellow in Character Delineation" 159). Using the allegorical parallel of the local history of the Madrid Cathedral with the character's story, the critic argues the blind beggar moreover to be a critique of Catholicism, even clericalism, in its official and most traditional form: "[that] Almudena's miraculous promises of a better life . . . all vanish under the cold examination of reason. . . . concur with his [Galdós's] evaluation at this time of the social effectiveness of organized, traditional religion" ("The Significance of the Name Almudena in Galdós' Misericordia" 494).

companion to health and to remain with him at the novel's conclusion (Schyfter, The Jew in the Novels of Benito Pérez Galdós 80-81). Moreover, the cathedral as the monolithic structure or city center that Chamberlin assumes is emblematic for a Galdós readership only existed in incomplete form. That is, at the historical moment surrounding Misericordia's publication, the Madrid cathedral, while existing as a municipal project, did not yet structurally stand in formalized public space--its construction was incomplete in Galdós's time. The Madrid public, then, who knew the cathedral as, Chamberlin suggests, the official spiritual center of their city would have known it only in anticipation of their patron saint's future enthroning (the major construction on the cathedral, aside from the crypt, would be completed in the later twentieth century). Still, no matter how historically problematic Chamberlin's stance on Almudena as a Catholic antagonist, it has nevertheless exposed a cultural clue in Galdós by engaging a more precise cultural-religious context.

These representatives from mainstream critical history have read Almudena as anything from a reference to all religions inclusively to one of monotheistic exclusionism, from Semitic to Jewish to Catholic. Nevertheless, the character has become estranged from its claims at representing the socio-historical tensions of specific ethno-religious groups and traditions that the Realist Galdós claimed to have addressed. Most neglected in this mix has been what the character in fact recalls of the cultural-religious history of Catholic Spain and, what is more, his doing so in an affirmative sense. As I have traced these patterns of critical neglect above, I have also pointed to certain isolated leads that each critic has opened. These are leads that, despite being buried in critical

agendas of painting author and text as timeless, lend themselves to a more cultural reading of the narrative figure at hand.[103]

Gathering these critical remnants up as threads to be woven, I will now proceed in the sections that follow to situate Almudena's symbolic value as pluralistically religious in a more complex sense. At the same time, I will overlay the interpretation of the character as Catholic with one that considers the cultural tradition more precisely within the historical era. As I do so, Galdós's Virgin Almudena, promisingly lying in wait in all the narrative regional trappings, will emerge as quite a different figure than earlier critics have assumed, that is, as an ethno-spiritually marginalized figure being converted into a symbolic protectoress and a symbol of the Catholic institution being converted into the spirit of the faith. As this new narrative figuration, Almudena will effectively begin to alter not only interpretations of the novel as a social commentary but also critical expectations about Galdós as a religious writer.

Our Lady of the Almudena as the Myth of Catholic Spain

While resisting the temptation to read the figure simply as aesthetic, Chamberlin's assessment of Almudena as Catholic remains not quite cultural enough for the kind of social realist approach that I take to the character here, in response to Galdós's claims for Realism. Nevertheless, the critic's strategy and findings deserve further consideration. Returning to the semantic possibilities lying in the name "Almudena" as a signifier, it

[103] Notable discussions of Almudena in a generally Spanish cultural context, sporadic at best, have been the following: Lambert's "Galdós and Concha-Ruth Morell," focusing on local Madrid portraits; both Chamberlin's "More Light on Galdós' Sephardic Source Materials: A Reply to A. F. Lambert" and his "The Importance of Rodrigo Soriano's Moros y cristianos in the Creation of Misericorida," implicating the character as recalling Spain's contemporaneous peripheries or contact with Moroccan culture in territorial disputes of the late-nineteenth century; Rupert C. Allen's "Pobreza y Neurosis en Misericordia, de Pérez Galdós," Hispanófila 33 (1968): 35-47, reading the character as a delusional manic depressive in the context of a marginalized underclass; and, most notably, Hazel Gold's "Outsider Art: Homelessness in Misericordia," Anales Galdosianos 36 (2001): 141-54, suggesting the character's physical displacement from the Madrid center and from the poorhouse in particular to be resistant to the social hierarchy.

would not be analytically untoward, I believe, to prioritize or redirect focus to a stone that criticism has left unturned, to let the Virgin herself assume the function of the signified behind the textual evidence--to use the archive of Spain's Catholic imaginary as a set of references behind the text's signifiers. Taking this alternate approach to an old puzzle then, I will first offer some modest insights on expressions of the Catholic faith associated with the Virgin Mary more generally and then turn to recount, in three phases, the history of Virgin Almudena, as the spiritual patron and physical icon adopted by a rising Spanish nation-state. This will allow me to provide the cultural background to trace how Galdós moves the figure beyond the spiritual, to point, rather, to her salience as a more precise socio-historical referent.

The Virgin Mary resonates profoundly within Catholicism as a culturally dynamic and pluralistic spiritual patron. In popular contexts of the faith or as part of a Catholic religious imaginary in many countries, she overshadows any other patron saint, even the most glorified, in terms of popularity or reverence paid to her and of her presence in the daily experience or lives of believers.[104] In the long history of her patronage, she has commonly been known to appear in visions, also known as "visitations," or otherwise to re-appear, almost incorporeally, as a physical likeness or an icon refigured to refer to her characteristics as a dynamic devotional signifier.[105] When particular appearances of Mary as a commonly identifiable cultural or faith phenomena begin to emerge, they often are known in religious contexts as a Marian advocation. Some of the most recognizable

[104] Christ, for example, is contemplated more as a biblical figure and less so as a spiritual presence in daily life.

[105] In the latter case, it should be noted here that the experience for Catholics is that the signified (the spiritual element itself) will be seen as miraculously present in the signifier (object considered to be sacred). And, at times, the signified will fail to be distinguishable at all from its signifier (thus looking to critics of the church like idolatry). Not an experience limited to Marian devotion, it may very commonly and overtly occur within that spiritual context. For example, the myriad of devotional statues of Mary's that have been claimed to weep may be contextualized thus or as attesting this most powerful symbolic transference for Catholics--as a particular subset of Marian signifiers will most tangibly take on the figure's most familiar biblical trait, weeping.

advocations include, for example, Our Lady of Guadalupe or The Virgin of Guadalupe (Mexico, 1531), Our Lady of Lourdes (France, 1858), Our Lady of Fátima (Portugal, 1917), and Our Lady of Medjugorje (Bosnia-Herzegovina, present-day).[106] While all are ostensibly forms of the Virgin Mary, the same Mary that bore Christ, all are, at once and simultaneously, diversified and distinct advocations, and each thus will have different devotional names, iconographic representations, and narrative histories that may mirror the collective need or, even, ethnicities of local groups or regions.[107]

While any number of Virgin patrons may serve as icons referring to a specific tale of faith, one of the distinguishing features of Our Lady of Almudena is that her iconographic form also refers to defining phases of Spain's religious history, that is, the pre-Christian or Christian, the Muslim conversion, and the institutionalized Catholic. Harking back to the roots of the advocation, the rudimentary faith following of this Virgin is typically dated either from AD 38 (the time of the Apostles) where she is represented by a statue or icon, or from the thirteenth century, where this now historical relic is said to have been lost in a fire but nevertheless to have been replaced by an exact

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[106] "Mary," The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions, 2000, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 18 July 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>.

[107] Where not otherwise indicated, I am generally informed in this above discussion by Linda B. Hall and Teresa Eckmann's Mary, Mother and Warrior: The Virgin in Spain and the Americas (Austin: U of Texas P, 2004) that focuses on the adaptability or changeability and, thus, universality of Mary within Catholicism. In terms of her separate devotions or "advocations" (a term they may coin?), they determine a rough categorization of Mary's tied to moments of the Christ story in the New Testament or to specific locations or groups. Moreover, they attest the potential impact of the figure historically and presently on peoples on religious, social or secular and national levels. They recount particularly that "[i]n late medieval Spain, for example, Monserrat and Guadalupe [a separate Spanish and not Latin American advocation] were the two poles of Iberian devotion. Networks of pilgrimage connected villages within the region, stimulating devotion and political and societal cohesion, not to mention economic activity. This pattern has continued in Latin America, with Guadalupe in Mexico as the pre-eminent pilgrimage destination now drawing more visitors yearly than any other Roman Catholic site except the Vatican. But there are many other Marian locations in Latin America--among them Copacabana in Bolivia, Chinquinquirá in Colombia, and Luján in Argentina--all with their Marys and all with significant national as well as religious content" (12-13).

replica.[108] Notably for Spain, this legendary, even rumored, existence of the state or icon well pre-dates the conquest of the Iberian peninsular by the Moors or Northwest-African Muslims (invading in the eighth century). The vague details in this history state that the likeness is to have been carved by St. Luke, possibly the Evangelist, and painted by Nicodemus, the Pharisee converted by Christ (John 3:1-21). The carving itself depicts a modestly dressed young Virgin holding the Christ child where, notably, both mother and child appear with deep hazelnut-complexion, likely mimicking that of Israelites. But the shading of the skin may not alone attest hers origin, especially as many a statue has darkened with age and use (e.g., with the build-up of candle soot). Still, this Mary would come to be called popularly by the diminutive "la morenita," meaning "the little brown one." And it is as such that this supposedly ethnic Mary is to have passed to St. James, a disciple of Christ and another alleged author of the New Testament, who in his travels preaching about the life of Christ conveyed her from Jerusalem and, eventually, to the Roman village that was then Madrid. Establishing a direct connection between the Israelites and the Catholic church, this historical Almudena would function in part as incorporating Spain's deeply rooted Christian history.

The next phase in the story of this same Virgin is recounted as her more miraculous re-appearances during the historical distress of invasion and occupation, initially of the Moors and later of the Christian kings. In this context, a painted image of her would become associated with yet another darker-skinned religious sect, although the reflection of race and ethnicity would come to be preserved in her devotional name,

[108] For these particulars and the account that follows, I rely on what may be considered an authoritative account or "Dossier de Nuestra Señora de la Almudena: Patrona de Madrid," Santa Iglesia Catedral de Santa María la Real de la Almudena, Arzobispado de Madrid, <http://www.archimadrid.es/catedral/almudena2004/dossier/default.htm>. For the nineteenth-century history, I additionally draw from "Sta. Mª la Real de la Almudena: Proceso de Restauración," El Taller Diocesano de Restauración, Fundación Ntra. Sra. de la Almudena, Arzobispado de Madrid, 10 June 2007 <http://www.archimadrid.es/tallerrestauracion/patrona/frames.htm>. N.B., navigate to "1 Historia" and then to "1.5 Intervenciones (Algunas intervenciones realizadas a la imagen actual)."

"Almudena." (Previously, she had been known as "la Virgen de la Villa" or "the Virgin of the Village or Town" and as "Santa María de la Vega" or "St. Mary of the Fertile Valley" after her primitive church.) In the first rounds of invasion, the years when Moors entered Madrid (c. 712-714), devotees threatened in their religion were said to have gone to lengths to preserve an image of the Virgin, as a symbolic preservation of the faith itself. That is, they would conceal the statue in or behind a "cube" or block of a Roman city wall, along with two burning candles (the latter as a test of devotion; see below), and would let it remain there (forgotten?), even as the wall itself would be converted into part of the Moorish defensive enclosure called "Almudayna" (the Arabic "almudin" meaning "store of wheat"). Over the centuries, particularly at a resolution of distress for Madrid Christians, the legend would return to circulation of the hidden presence of a Virgin that had aided in efforts to reconquer Spanish territory (and such tales of lights hidden behind walls recur in many religious traditions).

When Alfonso VI (King of Castile and Leon, 1072-1109) would return to Madrid in fulfillment of a vow to honor said protectoress after retaking Toledo in 1085, though, no living Christian could remember her exact whereabouts. It would be left to the devout to pray for the Virgin to reveal her location. These prayers would be miraculously answered when the original block of wall would dislodge itself, just as Alfonso was passing nearby in honorary procession, exposing the selfsame image with candles still burning. Providing thus a simultaneous testament of the faith and of divine protection for King and country, the Virgin would now become recognized formally as Madrid's patron saint and, as yet unnamed, would eventually come to be known as "Santa María la Real

de la Almudena," thus attaching a royal title to the lowly place and situation of her reappearance.[109]

Yet a third phase of this Virgin's history encompasses a broader expanse of time, until today, as this already dark-skinned Christian Virgin with a Muslim sounding name would take on new symbolic weight. Recall that Spain had begun as a collection of kingdoms to be united, notably, under monarchs Ferdinand and Isabel (fifteen / sixteenth centuries) and to be declared by them as officially Roman Catholic. This declaration would lead to the creation of the Spanish Inquisition and to the expulsion of the Jews and Muslims. In the second half of the sixteenth century, when Phillip II moved the Spanish royal court and thus the capital to Madrid, Almudena too would evolve. The Spanish aristocracy would now claim her as one of their patron saints[110] in terms of this

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[109] Beyond the above more official account of the legend, there are many variants in (popular) circulation that I have found. In one account, what causes the Virgin to reveal herself will be conditional to the sacrifice of a Madrid-Catholic girl, also a virgin, who apparently has some sense of the patron's whereabouts. In a kind of sacrificial ceremony, King Alfonso will be accompanied by the Madrid village in some nine days of intense prayer and only thereafter will the wall open up to reveal the Virgin and the girl fall dead on the site. My source here is Paloma de Miguel, "Vírgenes negras," Esfinge 7 (sept. 2004): par. 39, Editorial N.A., 10 June 2007 <http://www.editorial-na.com/articulos/articulo.asp?artic=233>. In another account, the renaming of the Virgin occurs as the result of an event taking place well after the retaking of Madrid or Toledo, at the end of the twelfth century. That is, children playing close to wall of the reclaimed mosque (now converted back to church) come across a supply of wheat supposed to have been stored there by Christians of the prior century and plentiful enough to feed a mass of citizens. As a result, the Virgin already housed in the church will ceremoniously be named "Almudena," as derived from the Arab word "almudin" meaning "store of wheat." Here I consulted "La Virgen de la Almudena," Real, Muy Ilustre y Primitiva Congregación de San Isidro de Naturlaes de Madrid, 10 June 2007 <http://www.congregacionsanisidro.org/vidas2.htm>. And in yet another account, the eleventh-century historical and legendary figure Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar or "El Cid" (Spain's most famous conqueror of Moors) will see the Virgin in a kind of vision. Here the Cid and his solider traveling the road from Toledo to Madrid come across an unfortunate, who they first take to be a male leper, fallen into a ditch. Offering their aid, they finally see his face clearly, discovering it rather to be a feminine figure of the Virgin. This Virgin, by revealing the hollow opening in the wall where her statue lay, instructs them on how to enter Madrid and thus to take it. I am informed here by Coro Marín, "El Pequealfa: la Virgen de la Almudena," Amalfa y Omega: Semanario Católico de Información 185 (nov. 1999): par. 3, Fundación San Agustín. Arzobispado de Madrid, 10 June 2007 <http://www.alfayomega.es/revista/1999/185/16_pequealfa.html>.

[110] At this time, the Virgin of Atocha, another Marian advocation specific to Madrid, likely succeeded Almudena in popularity as a patron saint for the city. For the church history of this Virgin, see both article links "Un poco de historia" and "La imagen de la Virgen de Atocha" on the webpage "Historia de la Basílica," Basílica-Parroquia Nuestra Señora de Atocha, 2 August 2009 <http://www.parroquiadeatocha.es/imagen.aspx>. See, further, Jeffrey Schrader, La Virgen de Atocha: Los

Catholicism, making pilgrimages to her various historic sites around Madrid as a new locality--not only for the state business, but also for nationally recognized holy relics.

In the seventeenth century, this aristocracy would direct devotion to the statue or icon itself, covering her bare feet with fine cloth and robes and adorning her with jewels--particularly a "rostrillo de plata" or silver face frame that would seem to suggest divinity, if not regality (although her formal coronation would not occur until the twentieth century; see below). Corresponding with these devotional and physical changes, even legends or miraculous accounts told or retold in this period would seem to point towards an upward mobility in terms of devotional groups. In one notable account, in the work of Spain's greatest dramatist Lope de Vega (1562-1635), a (feudal?) master will pray to Almudena to aid him in recovering a lost servant or slave. Thus would local hegemonic figures suggestively now favor Almudena as the officialized patron of a Catholic state.

Despite some the fairly permanent alterations made to the Virgin's physical representation, a nineteenth-century occurrence would seemly interrupt these local customs of adornment and glorification. In the last decade of the century, a restoration of the statue was ordered by Madrid's Archbishop Ciriaco Sancha y Hervás (who would be replaced by José María Cardinal Cos y Macho c.1892 / 1894). As part of the process of restoration, the statue was disrobed and her adornments were removed to reveal her simply carved Roman tunic, not quite covering her bare feet. But the restorer hired was not skilled and, in continuing to do the work, he would technically make a botch of it. A large public scandal resulted; and a second restoration, the most important, was commissioned. In this one, the reputable artisan Mulle de la Cerda not only succeeded in rectifying the problems of the first but also continued the trend of removing added

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Austrias y las imágenes milagrosas, trans. Teresa Sans and Fabián Chueca (Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2006).

structural features. Notably, the silver face frame was taken off, and the marks that remained were repainted with the same deep hazel-nut color to match the rest of the face. At the end of the ordeal, the Virgin Almudena was to emerge looking much less regal (comparatively bare to what had been the custom) and was furthermore to appear in that very state in religious processions that took place in Madrid on her feast day.[111]

Later centuries would not continue such counter trends in the Virgin's national image. After the political passage of the Spanish nation-state from the rule of monarchs to that of dictators, it would be under Francisco Franco in the 1940s that both the Virgin's primary place of worship, the Madrid Cathedral, and the Virgin herself would be honored. Significantly for her political meaning, the cathedral would be altered from its original design to mimic the architecture and directional orientation of Madrid's Royal Palace. And in 1948 Almudena, as a Catholic advocation, would be given maximum military honors in a kind of less traditional ecclesiastical coronation or canonization ceremony affected here, notably, at the mutual hand of church and state and in a renewed contract of the political right with the old aristocratic church (for more historical context for this point, see my Introduction). Yet, with this transformation, I contend, la morenita or the real ethno-religious sense of the name as known to Sts. Luke and James or to marginalized Catholics, who had named her for a Moorish wall, would have been rendered all but meaningless for the underclass public to whom she had first appealed.

Such religious icons are often the subject of manipulation by the organized Church or its related institutions. A religious figure, such as the Virgin, can straightforwardly make this kind of contextual transition, that is, beginning as widely

[111] The nineteenth century's treatment of the Virgin is interesting with respect to what I will proceed to claim as Galdós's own treatment of the figure in Misericordia. Where these restorations expose the Virgin's original features, the author would seem to be implicitly reinterpreting this local event as a historical-religious deconstruction. Further, the author would complete this deconstruction by retelling Catholic Spain's marginal history through his own Catholic-Moorish-Jewish Almudena. See my next sections.

popular in a general Church or unfiltered religious imaginary (e.g., such as the Apostles or the Christians in Madrid may portray) and becoming recognized in the more formalized or cultural-critical Catholic church. At this point, the more detailed cultural elements in such representations, often controversial ones, tend to become neutralized away from their original, often more social-critical origins. This occurs as images / icons / relics or as histories / legends / narratives tied to the particular devotion's religious cults (or sub-cultures), later in their development, will come up against the judgment and controlling legal processes of other institutions.[112] While the creation of new references in church doctrine provides avenues for cultural expression departing from the scriptural, the formal acceptance of Marian advocations almost dangerously falls under the rubric of institutional self-preservation for the Church. Reacting to a set of cultural circumstances, for example, ecclesiastics may choose either to introduce or delay devotions from entering the doctrinal faith, thus attempting to control popular devotions. Even the most non-committal gesture such as the acknowledgement of a cult (or anything short of calling it blasphemous) might have diverse effects, such as providing a spiritual guide or emblem or identity to a particular group or community or nation (an identity, notably, shared with its church) or giving popular credence to the conviction that the Catholic Church is universally that of poor and dispossessed communities.

In the particular case of Our Lady of Almudena, her process of institutionalization in the church has taken her from being the patron or spiritual emblem of incipient or marginalized religious factions in an early Spain to that of the religious hegemony taking her as a modernizing force. This process in her case might further be viewed as reductive in terms of Spain's ethno-religious history. The particular elisions made in her history

[112] I will address this process for saints more generally in my chapter "Benina's Denial of the 'Saint' in St. Rita."

may be outwardly indicated by the diverse physical modes and attributes noted by her public in entitlements, that is, her brown skin or ethnicity is first celebrated, so to speak, in the popularly diminutive and ethno-religiously marginal la morenita and, then elsewhere, her color is obscured in fine linens and silver framing as she would be adopted as the royal and hegemonic "Santa María la Real . . . ." As such, she would not only be appropriated by the Catholic church for spiritual purposes but, moreover, by a political hegemony for secular or national purposes. Further, this Virgin's feast day is celebrated liturgically and, that is, not by ritual or festival, with a liturgy closed to general public worship in the Madrid Cathedral.[113] Suggestively, at some point between the time of Sts. Luke and James and that of Franco, the Spanish populace would have become more distanced from and less directly engaged with a patron becoming laden with hegemonic revisions to her form and function, especially as she might now be considered a tool of the political right in a revisionist history.

The classes that brought Spain into nationhood were at pains to construct from the nation's Semitic history a national identity aligned with Catholic purity and longevity. As a patron saint at the center of this history and identity construction, the Almudena that has

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[113] The relative exclusivity in which the advocation still readily exists in modern Spain is implied, even in the mere titular sense, by the article "La Virgen de la Almudena, una fiesta desconocida a nivel popular: Actos oficiales, una misa y novena" ["The Virgin of the Almudena, An Unknown Festival on the Popular Level: Official Acts, a Mass and a Novena"] appearing in one of Spain's major papers El País, 11 sept. 1977. Revealing comparisons might be drawn with other Madrid patrons and popular devotions. A patron saint most often recognized contemporarily is eleventh- / twelfth-century San Isidro Labrador 'St. Isidore the Laborer.' Isidro was a pious farmer (whose fields were plowed by angels) and is well-marked ritualistically by the general Madrid and Spanish public. (N. B., he was married to María Torribia, known as "Maria de la Cabeza," who has become as well-known and revered.) Rivaling San Isidro's popularity is a Marian advocation dating from the eighteenth century, known as the Virgen de la Paloma 'Virgin of the Dove'--although this Mary is not considered to be one of Madrid's official patron saints. For the church history of San Isidro, see the home page of a devotional congregation of the saint, Real, Muy Ilustre y Primitiva Congregación de San Isidro de Naturales de Madrid, home page, 2 August 2009 <http://congregacionsanisidro.org/indice1.htm> (you will be redirected with more convenient links to various versions of the biography from the Madrid Archdiocese site). For the church history of the Virgen de la Paloma, see the brief biography "La Virgen de la Paloma," Blog Congregación de San Isidro de Madrid, Real, Muy Ilustre y Primitiva Congregación de San Isidro de Naturales de Madrid, 2 August 2009 <http://congregacionsanisidro.blogia.com/2007/072401-la-virgen-de-la-paloma.php>.

come down through the ages might well have appeared to an author recuperating Spain's religious imaginary to contain historical elisions and prejudices needing to be unpacked, and with reference to less than hegemonic interests. That is, Galdós might well have seen opportunities in this figure's history for reminding a contemporaneous readership immersed in this dominant rhetoric about the religious and ethno-religious histories, both Catholic and Semitic, that had been rewritten as Catholic (e.g., where the Arabic name "Almudena" would have been neutralized enough to mark a patron saint as Catholic). Thus, as I turn to how Galdós reclaims this history, I will discount the creation of iconoclasts or other overt critical affronts as viable strategies for the author. Rather, I will attempt to recover how he reuses the Virgin and her history to retell this history and to offer a more subtle counter-commentary, opposing the vision of Spain as a Catholic monolith.

Galdós's Almudena or a Counter-Narrative of Spanish Nationalism, Part I: Historical-Religious "Name Games"

Given the copious symbolic lore revolving around the Virgin Almudena, a close reading of Misericordia's own Almudena now will become essential, considering particularly the iconographical recontextualizations of the name "Almudena" as a signifier with historical references (other than that of the dominant contemporary Catholic or monotheist tradition). Here, I suggest, the author would expect members of his Catholic readership to respond to these narrative signifiers outside the scope of the religious tradition they practiced. Yet, at the same time, I am however guided by the notion that the novelist would not have relied upon any reference too arcane or researched for the average reader of the time to catch, were that reader at all informed about the Virgin. Instead, as I will demonstrate, Galdós resorts to new strategies of

Realism to make his point with Almudena--first by tapping into what this reader would assume to be the case about common cultural stereotypes and commonly shared biblical figures, rituals, rites, etc., and then by exploiting these assumptions in narrative manipulations that would serve to revise those expectations. In the first and second parts of this subsection, I will explore two such manipulations, which I term "name games" and "ritualistic play." Here, I will demonstrate that, by revealing the ethno-religious features or pieces of the portrait of his Almudena and by re-assembling them in a syncretic whole, the novelist will thus encourage his readership to look critically at a national Spain, both in religious and socio-political terms.

The strategy of name games, as I define it, might be considered as a kind of repeated chain of symbolic clues attached to the chosen figure "Almudena." Such clues would serve the author in dialogue with his readership both on an implicit level, as I have mentioned, and also very straightforwardly, yet almost superficially. For this reason, the effect of name games will be somewhat difficult to assess in practice as I work through my analysis here of what the author might have intended to put into play with his readers. That is to say, the treatments that I provide, methodically unpacking these clues or reclaiming them for a modern readership, will require far more conscious thought than what I am claiming would have been required of the original target audience. For the latter, each clue, quite relevant to the contemporaneous moment, would likely have been digested rather naturally or automatically--a significant amount of this information was probably common knowledge in the city with that cathedral.

Moreover, their author treats this knowledge in light, fleeting references that might pass rapidly, making light and effortless links to place names and proper names with great potential but not demanding more of the contemporaneous reader than would, for example, a psychologist's test of word association. As such associations become

extended, leading far from the locus of Spanish-Catholic Madrid, I believe, the original signified or the Virgin would herself be transformed, perhaps as much in the vision of the reader as in the author's strategizing. And, as she would already exist in cultural consciousness as Catholic, this transformation will more properly take the form of an ethno-religious deconstruction with political implications, as an audience is brought to face its piecemeal knowledge more strictly.

In the first narrative name game, Galdós will offer a reader the detail of a place name-dropped into the opening description of his Almudena, as one of seven portraits of beggars sketched in the opening three chapters of the novel. The character is introduced with as little as his own name "el ciego Almudena (de quién hablará después)"[114] ["the blind man Almudena (of who I will talk about later)"]. Sparse as this reference may seem, one need not conclude that the gesture is teasing or that it was taken as such by readers of the time. But, rather, it had in essence already produced an effect for a city reader there, bringing to mind a patron whose iconic form already existed in the culture. Executed with such economy, the author would be free thus to begin immediately to re-envision that cultural form, first and foremost, by means of an apparent gender switch that equates, in a disorientating move, the female patron with a male persona, a blind beggar. (I will return to this point of gender reversal in my project conclusion.) Later, he will add to that disorientation with "el ciego llamado Almudena, del cual, por lo pronto, no diré más sino que es árabe, del Sus, tres días de jornada más allá de Marrakesh. Fijarse bien" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 76-77) ["the blind man called Almudena, of whom, for the moment, I will not say more than that he is Arab, from Sous, three days

[114] Benito Pérez Galdós, Misericorida, ed. Luciano García Lorenzo and Carmen Menéndez, 2a ed. (Madrid: Cátedra, 1982) 74. In this project, I reference several editions of Galdós's Misericordia that will generally be distinguished in secondary or subsequent references within the main text with the author's name, title of work, and latest publication date appearing in parentheses. Here, for example, for this edition (which is also my primary text) I will use "Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: [page number]" in all further references.

journey further than or beyond Marrakech"]. Noteworthy here is the charged and almost cautionary "fijarse bien" ["mark this well"] coming at the tale of a string of seemingly obscure ethno-religious associations, a phrase often used in folk story-telling.[115] Yet, when read in more precise contemporaneous cultural perspective, these associations will seem more likely to be familiar and accessible for local readers.

Looking more closely at this moment in the narrative, certain details will stand out as providing readers a kind of roadmap heading south, from a Spanish perspective. As the author indicates "tres días de jornada más allá de Marrakesh," a reader would then be led to the Virgin's native land, falling in modern-day's southern Moroccan region of the Souss-Massa-Draâ.[116] At the relevant time surrounding Misericordia's publication (1897), this relocation would have been culturally charged, especially in the case of Spain. How precisely the historical "Sus" ["Sous"][117] could have been familiar to its readers might be gauged by its separate entry, cited below in its entirety, from the 1911 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica:

> a province of southern Morocco, once an independent kingdom, and still too unruly to be opened to Europeans, who have nevertheless for centuries past made efforts to secure a foothold. Its principal towns are Tarudant, Iligh (the old capital), and Glimin on the Wad Nun. Tarudant, the present capital, flourished in the 12th century on account of the neighbouring copper-mines. Saltpetre is now

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[115] This entire descriptive line has traditionally been one of the most problematic surrounding Almudena. Of the reference "Sus," for example, Ricard assumes that the author makes an oblique reference to the character's Semitism (and only vaguely in a historical sense, if at all) ("Sur le Personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Galdós et ses romans 56). Chamberlin, for his part, will not attempt a reading here, admitting "precisely why . . . 'Sus' has not yet been determined" ("The Significance of the Name Almudena in Galdos' Misericordia" 491). As for the "fijarse bien" ["mark this well"], Ricard, equally will admit of that "on ne sait pas trop pourquoi" ["one does not know precisely why"] ("Sur le Personnage d'Almudena dans Misericordia," Galdós et ses romans 56). And, in the editorial notes of my edition of Misericordia, it is otherwise acknowledged to be a mere allusion to a Catholic Benina's heightened grace as tolerant of her marginal neighbor, a Moor (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 76-77, fns. 34-35).

[116] For a modern history of Morocco (e.g., one published after 1997), see C. R. Pennell's Morocco since 1830: A History (New York: New York UP, 2000).

[117] Appearing by itself, "Sous" is the most common historical English spelling. My source for this information is Thomas Kerlin Park and Aomar Boum, "Sous," Historical Dictionary of Morocco (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006).

> the only important product. Ports might be opened at Agadir Ighir (once occupied by the Portuguese for thirty years as Santa Cruz), Massa, Ifni, Arksis and Assaka at the mouth of the Wad Nun. As a coveted district, all kinds of natural riches are attributed to Sus, but it may be assumed that they are exaggerated. Europeans land at their peril, since the coast is by imperial order closed to trade, no custom-house being provided. Most of the business of Sus is carried on at great fairs lasting eight or fifteen days, during which time all roads of approach are guaranteed safe by the tribesmen that trade may be uninterrupted. Caravans from Sus laden with copper-ware, olive oil, butter, saffron, wax, skins, dates, dried roses, etc., are sent to Marrakesh, four days' journey from Tarudant. Susis are well known in the north of Morocco as able tradesmen and clever metal workers. They live frugally, and are only prodigal in powder and human life. Their language is almost exclusively Shilhah, a dialect of Berber.[118]

This almost contemporaneous representation of the western thought on the subject is noteworthy in its use of phrases such as "too unruly," "Europeans land at their peril," and "Susis . . . are only prodigal in [gun] powder and human life." It is apparent that the territory would have been viewed as something of a siren of trade, beckoning but treacherous. This perception would no doubt have been built from the centuries of cultural-historical conflict with the region, especially in the two long historical episodes or "waves" where it would be aggressed as a colonial interest for a growing imperial Western Europe.

The first wave of the entrance of the Sous into Spain's popular memory would follow on the heels of the Reconquest of the Iberian peninsular from Moorish possession by Spanish and Portuguese kingdoms. In their fury to push back their perceived invaders, sights would now be set at expanding their own territories into the most desirable and accessible fertile coasts and plains of North Africa. While edging up on Morocco's coastlines, the holdings of both Spain and Portugal there would, however, be brief: Agadir would be won by 1515 and lost by 1575 by the Portuguese, Ifni (mentioned in the

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[118] "Sus," 1911 Encyclopedia, 2007, LoveToKnow Free Online Encyclopedia, 10 June 2007 <http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Sus>.

citation above) won and lost by the Portuguese, only northern Ceuta and Melilla would remain in Spanish possession by the end of the period. In the late-sixteenth century, the overall loss would be cemented after a ruling southern Moroccan dynasty would single-handedly repel Christian invaders. The Sous, along with more central and northern Moroccan regions, would become closed to trade with Europe, securing a period relatively free of exploration of its interiors by any foreign empire. For imperial powers, however, the bitter taste of this stopper to territorial expansion economic trade gain and would be carried forward as cultural-historical baggage into subsequent centuries.

The second wave of the region's relationship with Spain, beginning c.1830 in North Africa and reaching a height from 1875 to 1914 on the whole of the African continent, would bring the Sous to the forefront as a stubborn target and, moreover, as point of apprehension for western will and ambition. While Spain had been occupied in this period with maintaining its holdings of an earlier expansion in the Americas, France became the new pretender in the Sous. Lending a new rhetoric to colonial aggression that was interested in colonization and not merely commercial venture, French campaigns in the territory were to press (yet never realize) the transition of a newly denoted barbarous zone into pacified Christian colony.[119] With relatively few holdings in North Africa, Spanish interest in southernmost Morocco Spain would, nevertheless, lead it to negotiate possession in 1860 of the ancient Portuguese holding of Ifni. This territory lay on a narrow strip of coastline just across the Atlantic from the Spanish Canary Islands but, most notably, opened up in all other directions by land to the fiercely independent

[119] In this gesture, further, "a triumph of civilization over barbarism . . . became the justification for the conquest and colonization . . . . [T]his notion of a civilizing mission sustained the French Empire in North Africa almost to the end." My source for this citation is Michael Brett's "North Africa," Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism Since 1450, 2007, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale. University of Texas Libraries. 10 June 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

territories of the Sous.[120] Precariously situated, then, especially considering France's failure at colonizing the greater part of the southern Morocco zone in this period, the Sous would allow Spain to maintain a presence there only through indirect rule, that is, by co-opting Moroccan caids (from the 1880s until the 1930s). The failure to impose itself otherwise in the region kept at bay, as it were, by an adversary lying in the heartland of Spain's historical adversary would very well have looked for a contemporaneous Spain as a failed crusade against the Moors.

Within this cultural context, as I have explored it above, Galdós's mention of "Almudena" in association with "Sus" would seem to constitute much more than the specification of "Semite" that most critics have stressed, reading the character as recalling a religious transcendence and even an ethno-religious synchronization during the years of Moorish occupation. Here, rather, and with a most economical narrative gesture, the novelist would strike at a specific cultural nerve for Spain, if not for most of Western Europe. While the root of this nerve in Spain's case would hark back further, at least as far back as the Conquest and Reconquest, it would not only be a collective memory or the distant but automatic response of a historically engrained intolerance that would be tapped. The Sous, rather, has a particular cultural meaning in Spain's popular imaginary, dredging up national frustrations and disillusionment (even fears), surpassing that historic period, running through Galdós's contemporaneous moment, and still present

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[120] One must distinguish the territory of the Sous from two other Spanish territories: the "Spanish Sahara" and the "Riff" region--in neither of these land claims and at times pacified territories was it included. (N.B., a footnote in my 1982 Cátedra edition of Misericordia appears to erroneously indicate the Sous as falling in the Riff and, thus, to assume it to be a pacified zone.) The former comprised the Spanish coastal lands just south of Morocco specifically the "Río de Oro" (the land from Cap Blanc to Cap Bojador) and a northward extension of that land to Cap Juby to include the Saguia-el-Hamra. The whole of the area was possessed by Spain from 1884 to 1975. The latter comprised the region across from the Strait of Gibraltar with which Spain was in continual conflict in the 1890s. It pacified it with the aid of the French, lost it again after a crushing defeat and the death of a Spanish governor (which carried a lasting socio-political stigma), and finally achieved a peace treaty. For a history specifically on the conflicts with the Riff, see my source here Agustín R. Rodríguez Gonzalez's "El conflicto de Melilla en 1893," Hispania 171 (1989): 235-66.

by at least 1911. The novelist would here have been engaging with his readership on the level of a historically grounded socio-politics, and, this engagement, more precisely, shades his decision to call his blind beggar "Moorish," as in coming from the Sous, and thus making the local Virgin a foreigner of a particular sort.

In the second narrative name game, Galdós will further associate his now Moorish Almudena with a rather charged biblical name in a moment from Chapter 13, where the characters themselves discuss all manner of names (nicknames, Christian names, etc.). Initiated by a short bit of introductions where, for example, Benina, Almudena's roommate Pedra, and Pedra's friend la Diega are all introduced, the focus then shifts to the clarification of Pedra's pet name for Almudena or the unexplained utterance "Jai"[121]:

> . . . y dime una cosa: ¿por qué esta gorrinaza de Pedrilla te llama a ti Jai? ¿Cuál es tunombre en tu religión y en tu tierra cochina, con perdón?
>
> Llamarle mi Jai porque ser morito él dijo la trágica remedando su habla.
>
> -Nombre mío Mordejai declaró el ciego, y ser yo nacido en un puebro mu bunito que llamar allá Ullah de Bergel, terra de Sus. . . ¡oh! terra divina, bunita . . . mochas arbolas, aceita mocha, miela, frores, támaras,mocha güena. (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 145)

Here, the name game is put in full play, if you will, as the blind beggar the reader has known thus far as "Almudena" reveals his birth name to be "Mordejai." Aside from the re-naming being pertinent here, how it is revealed provides the reader with crucial detail about the Almudena being portrayed. Cutting to the heart of the conversation, one finds it sequenced first with la Diega's question to Almudena, "why does Pedra call you Jai?," and subsequently with Pedra's response, ". . . because he is (my little) Moor," and with Almudena's further response, "my name is Mordejai."[122] On the surface, this explanation

[121] Up until this point in the narrative, the blind man has been called by one proper name "Almudena," although also by the nickname "moro" or a variant of that.

[122] "Ullah de Bergel" in this citation most likely refers to Oulad Berrhil, a village of southern Morocco on the desert plain bordering the rich agricultural land of the Sous river valley (the valley running between

may seem clear enough, albeit again exotic and apparently, from la Pedra's perspective at least, based on Moorish-sounding names. The trouble here though is that Almudena's response would, in a more precise cultural context, correct an error rather than amplifying a reference. That is, his answer is "Mordejai" and not "Moor"--a distinction and correction that any good reader of the Bible would likely have caught.[123]

"Mordejai" or, in English, "Mordecai," is the name of a Jewish historical figure and prophet figuring prominently in nearly the whole of the Book of Esther in the Old Testament.[124] Seemingly more relevant to Judaism than Christianity, this book is nevertheless omitted for questions of historical authenticity from the canonical Hebrew Bible and appended to the Roman Catholic one--in the latter typically appearing in chapters of a devotional, rather than historical, nature. The story itself relates the near

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High Atlas and Anti-Atlas mountain ranges). Citing Flammand's work on Jewish roots in southern Morocco, Ricard has already indicated that this village--an ancient Berber settling ground and market town--once had a large Jewish agricultural "mellah" or community but that this Jewish population may well have later been exterminated (so that only graves sites would be left today). I would add to this insight that in a more contemporaneous time Oulad Berrhil would perhaps have been better known outside of Morocco and by the Jewish community for its yearly moussem (Assarag? or Rabbi Amrane?) or trade festival known to attract Jews from the United States, Europe, and especially, Israel. This more subtle implication of a coexistence of ethnicities and faiths (Berbers, Muslims, Jews) may well have been a cultural-historical correspondence drawn by the author between the Kingdom of Morocco and Spain thus to discourage a too-simple vision of the Reconquest. For indications of this history, see my sources here Michael M. Laskier's "Morocco," Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 10 June 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/> and David Corcos's "Jewish Quarter," Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale. University of Texas Libraries, 10 June 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

[123] If this is so and Pedra in facts gets the reference wrong then she would begin to look here like the Peter that her name recalls. That is, in the story surrounding Christ's Crucifixion, St. Peter, the Apostle, was warned of the pattern of signs that would lead him to deny Christ, yet he would do so anyway (Mt. 26: 69–75). Both la Petra and her biblical namesake in this way may be considered bad (Catholic or Christian) readers of signs and symbols.

[124] Now that the names, both signifiers and signifieds, associated with Almudena are multiplying, I will for clarity's sake use "Mordejai" to refer to the new nominative signifier for Almudena (a younger Almudena) and "Mordecai" to refer to the new signified or the cultural-historical referent of the Jewish prophet himself.

annihilation of the Jewish population of the gentile kingdom of Elam in Persia of the third century BC.[125]

After a servant Mordecai publicly shows disrespect to Haman, a courtier and favorite of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I, 486-465 BC), he imperils the Jews of the kingdom. Namely, the King, under the influence of his favorite, legalizes the slaughter of all Jews and the seizure of their property--an atrocity to occur on a single day chosen or drawn by lot. As the story plays out, however, and these plans are revealed to Mordecai by prophetic dream, the servant soon turns his own rebelliousness into a national uprising, urging his fellows Jews to affect their own deliverance. To do so, he mourns publicly, by dressing in sackcloth with ashes, and institutes a three-day fast for all Jews. Also, he procures the help of his cousin and adopted daughter Esther, serving at the time as one of the royal concubines. As such, she would have been in a position to use her own influence to obtain a revocation of the order, although she would have taken great risk in publicizing her Jewishness.

By her own shrewdness, Esther nevertheless wins the King's mercy in addition to a reverse of sentencing. The King orders the execution of Haman and his sons, the sanctioning of the plunder of the enemies of the Jews, and the promotion of Mordecai in the court. Mordecai, in turn, establishes the yearly "Feast of Purim" or "Feast of Lots" in memorial to a people delivered from political and religious suppression. Where "Mordejai" as the re-naming of the blind beggar will serve to recall a moment of Jewish

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[125] My sources here include "Biblical Literature," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2003, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 10 June 2007 <http://search.eb.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>; "Book of Esther," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2004, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 10 June 2007 <http://search.eb.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/>; and "Purim," Britannica Student Encyclopedia, 2004, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 10 June 2007 <http://search.eb.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/>. See also Arthur McMahon, "Esther," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1909, New Advent, 1 August 2009 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/> and E. A. Ballmann, "Esther, Book of," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 5 April 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

deliverance, it will however also echo what was previously recalled by "Almudena" or, in essence, a Spanish-Catholic deliverance. In these parallels between national religious deliverers and the histories that popularized them as such, the novelist would yet again be leading his reader in a game of nominative associations, although now, rather. from "Moorish" to "Jewish."[126]

Here it should be noted that, while this story of Mordecai would be implicated for the reader as part of the novel's embedded symbolism, the scene sequences play out a drama surrounding the name Almudena on the narrative level itself. Not surprisingly, this drama will begin as a story that Almudena tells to his small audience Benina, Pedra, and la Diega of his youth (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 145-49), encapsulated by the nominative re-labeling of "Mordejai." He will recount that in this period he had sinned against his father by thoughtlessly stealing his money and then abandoning him and, in some kind of poetic justice, he would lose his sight and his life's fortune. Left in such a pitiable state, Mordejai would nevertheless ask the local gods to look favorably on him and grant him consolation in the form of a bit of money and some female companionship. In answer, he would receive the vision of a god-like figure "King Samdai" (to be further discussed in a subsequent section), indicating that he must choose between the two comforts, either fortune or love, and the faithless son will not hesitate to chose the latter or "muquier," as it would sound or appear in his bastardized Spanish. With that choice made, the King would offer to him a vision of his mate: "una hembra . . . bien envuelta en

[126] Yet another saint's name reference that would recall Almudena as Moorish is contained in the name of his urban dwelling or "la posada de Santa Casilda." St. Casilda is in fact an eleventh-century Moorish princess in Toledo, Spain who would bring food and provisions to her father's Christian prisoners. After a period of illness, she will openly convert to Christianity, living out her days in a hermitage. I am informed here by "Casilda of Briviesca V (AC)," Saint of the Day: April 9, St. Patrick Catholic Church (Washington, DC), 7 April 2009 <http://www.saintpatrickdc.org/ss/0409.shtml#casi> and "Casilda (d. about 1007)," Dictionary of Women Worldwide: 25,000 Women Through the Ages, 2007, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 7 April 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

un manto . . . [yendo] por el camino" (149) ("a woman . . . wrapped in a cloak . . . [walking] along the road"). With the face of the woman in the vision obscured, it would be for Almudena, as he himself tells it, to both to discover her identity and to pursue her.

At this moment in the scene, one wonders who this woman could possibly be and what action Almudena might take next to find her. Breaking the tension first, la Diega articulates the most obvious analogy, pointing firmly at Benina: "'Entonces será la señora,' apuntó la Diega señalando no sin cierta impertinencia a la pobre Benina" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 149). Benina will react strongly, denying the role, as if offended at being made the subject of some kind of romantic fantasy: "¿Yo? Jesús me valga! Yo no soy ninguna tarascona que anda por los caminos" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 149). Almudena, however, with the idea now planted in his mind, will have the precedent now to act out a series of romantic gestures and advances towards Benina, As he does so, in successive scenes, he will act as a rather awkward or bad sentimental lover.

Yet not to be left hanging here on the ups and downs of this romance, a good Catholic reader, I argue, would already have a sense of where such references might lead, as the implied cultural story of Mordecai-Esther will now forecast and qualify the narrative one of Almudena / Mordejai-Benina. Remember that in the biblical book named for its female heroine, the deliverance of the Jewish community is a collaborative effort. Mordecai would make the external display as a marginal (outside the palace walls) and giving the Jewish community its cues, but Esther would face the King and would run the risk of losing the relative comfort of her station within the palace, not to mention her life. By implication now, the romantic advances that Almudena will make towards Benina and Benina's seeming willingness to take her cues from him will rise in expectation for a

reader of a kind of collaboration--of faiths, of ethnicities, of cultural historical narratives--building to a kind of national deliverance or a re-envisioning of one.

Clearly, all is not what it would seem with Galdós's symbolic use and reuse of names. Requiring of the reader some mental unpacking, these names will nonetheless function for many as a kind of guided reconsideration of a rather too-familiar figuration of a national icon. Historical homogenization or reductionism had set in on this story, where a dominant narrative has in effect smoothed over inconvenient or unwanted ethno-religious variant. However, the traces of these older stories would not have been erased completely. Taking a closer look at the Conquest history reveals the latest version of that story as decked in fine robes and adornments given by Spanish-Catholic aristocrats and royalty to a national religious icon. For many readers, therefore, Galdós here will have effectively reclaimed those social underlayers or old forgotten identifiers in the rather obscured vision now a contemporaneous Spain. A polemical narrative gesture in and of itself, this gesture will be heightened still further as the novelist turns to re-envision a national identity that re-integrates the marginal within the hegemonic, colliding these elements as equal players in a much larger historical scope.

Galdós's Almudena or a Counter-Narrative of Spanish Nationalism, Part II: "Ritualistic Play"

The strategy of ritualistic play that I define here will demonstrate another way in which an author such as Galdós makes use of Catholic iconography as a content through which to speak in subtle ways to a specific readership about broader cultural issues. Specifically, the novelist looks here to provide his readership with a schematic for restoring a national construct, now that his narrative has deconstructed it in the form of the Catholic-Moorish-Jewish Almudena. As I will demonstrate, this lesson will occur

within the narrative context of separate and oftentimes extended ritual scenes where signifiers will tend to group, making for a slower and progressive effect of layering on of meaning, as the narrative builds toward an ethno-religious conglomeration or synchronization of the material's many layers. As instigator, participant, and player in this odd mélange, Almudena will continue to narrate Spain's marginal self. But it is Benina now who will become the tool for dialoguing with this marginality as an enlightened Catholic Spain ought to, demonstrating likely cultural preconceptions about the nation and then how to rethink them. In this way, with the two figures in negotiation or in dialogue, Galdós will dramatize an implicit cultural polemic about national identity and, further, to engage his readership in it.

The first ritual or rite to unveil in this context of a kind of ceremony of national redemption taps the pagan or occult world and associates it, quite daringly, with another. Presented in a rather long scene sequence, woven piecemeal into the narrative, this ceremonial will begin as the private divulgences of impoverished fellow cohorts Almudena and Benina (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: mainly, 135-41). Here, Benina will confess her desperation, and Almudena will present her with the tempting solution of securing the riches of the sanctimonious and swindling type, don Carlos Moreno y Trujillo, who she knows well (he is the relative of her impoverished employer; he provides a meager allowance). All this gain, he assures her, will be possible with the help of the very same god-like King Samdai, clarified now as "rey de baixo terra" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 137) ["king of the underworld"] and who Benina will otherwise take to be the devil.[127] Devil or no devil, the Catholic woman will be tempted

[127] For Schyfter, the character's practice of ritual reclaims the tradition of North African Jews, whose historical monotheism mixed with folklore and popular cults of magic and superstition. Further, this critic indicates that this kind of suspicion on the part of Christians, that is, of the diabolical nature of North African ritual, would have been quite typical. Almudena's King Samdai, in particular, she suggests would

to collaborate with her exotic friend. And while Almudena begins to make his own preparations for the anticipated service, lighting a smoking earthen pot and offering prayers, Benina will take instruction on gathering apparatus for the ceremony.[128] Thereafter, and before further anticipating the rite, the novelist will draw an association between Almudena's faith or practice and Benina's. This association, notably, will be overt in the narrative as Benina finds comparable miraculous potential in the situation between the magical charities of Samdai and the rewards given by the "Reyes Magos" ["three Magi"] at Christmas (reflections thus of the three Kings at Christ's birth).[129] Nevertheless, at a later moment, the reader will learn that Benina's participation in the ceremony would in part be forfeited by her failure to show up at the appointed time.

In her initial suspicions that Almudena's Samdai may constitute the devil,

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likely have represented the Hebrew "Ashmedai" or the king of the demons (The Jew in the Novels of Benito Pérez Galdós 92-96).

[128] As Almudena himself explains it here (and sometimes indirectly through the narrative voice), the ceremony would first require her to lay her hands on the items of a peculiar grocery list:

> N'cesitas cosas mochas. Comprar tú cosas. Lo primier candil de barro. Lo primier candil de barro. Pero comprarlo has tú sin hablar paliabra.
>
> Almudena ordenó después que había de buscar una olla de barro con siete agujeros, con siete nada más, todo sin hablar, porque si hablaba no valía.
>
> Luego era forzoso procurarse un palo de carrash, madera de África, que aquí llaman laurel. . . . (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 138-39)

And, thereafter, it would be necessary for her to follow a rather intricate and odd procedure:

> Bueno: pues reunidas estas cosas, se pondría el palo al fuego hasta que se prendiera bien . . . . Esto había de ser el viernes a las cinco en punto. Si no, no valía. Y el palo estaría ardiendo hasta el sábado, y el sábado a las cinco en punto se le metía en el agua siete veces, ni una más ni una menos.
>
> Luego se vestía el palo con ropas de mujer, como una muñeca, y bien vestidito se le arrimaba a la pared, poniéndole derecho, amos, en pie. Delante se colocaba el candil de barro, encendido con aceite, y se le tapaba con la olla, de modoque no se viese más luz que la que saldría por los siete bujeros, y a corta distancia se ponía la cazuela con lumbre para echar los sahumerios, y se empezaba a decir la oración una y otra vez con el pensamiento, porque hablada no valía. Y así se estaba la persona, sin distraerse, sin descuidarse, viendo subir el humo del benjuí, y mirando la luz de lossiete agujeros, hasta que a las doce . . . . (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 139)

[129] "Benina se embelesada oyéndole, y si a pie juntillas no le creía, se dejaba ganar y seducir de la ingenua poesía del relato, pensando que si aquello no era verdad, debía serlo. ¡Qué consuelo para los miserables poder creer tan lindos cuentos! Y si es verdad que hubo Reyes Magos que traían regalos a los niños, ¿por qué no ha de haber otros Reyes de ilusión, que vengan al socorro de los ancianos, de las personas honradas que no tienen más que una muda de camisa, y de las almas decentes que no se atreven a saliporque deben tanto más cuanto a tenderos y prestamistas?" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 140).

Galdós's Benina would seem to anticipate a typical Spanish-Catholic voice expressing cultural preconceptions or prejudices. Later, however, when she finds an equivalent figure within the Catholic religious imaginary, she will challenge her original prejudice in terms that a Catholic would understand. By this gesture, the novelist exploits ritual, and the signs and symbols that compose it, as a kind of continuous ethno-religious spectrum through which cultural figures are re-inscribed into different cultural loci--encouraging a Spanish readership thus to apply the same principle or to re-consider to cultural figures such as Almudena in that same way or as meaningful beyond their traditional inscriptions or contexts. What has been made through, in short, can be remade through new forms of it.

The second ritual or rite in the narrative will also offer a re-reading, suggesting the accidental quality and composition of orthodox ritual. Occuring with some overlap with the first, Almudena here will advocate yet another solution to money troubles, a quick and dirty fix, if you will, as the scene is short (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982;: 214-15). Benina, however, not entirely convinced of the secured outcome of the first attempt, will refuse in her mind to "dar crédito a tales historias" ["give credit or credence to these stories"], but she does stay and listen to them (to every syllable, in fact). Eager to capture the imagination of his listener, the storyteller again promises her riches as he spins out a tale of the means by which to attain them, that is, with a the ritual of a fast--simple but one guaranteed to win her this favor. Any participant, he relates, would merely have to hollow out a largish hole in the ground and to remain in it for "los cuarenta días de penitencia" ["forty days of penance"] sustained by unsalted flour, donning underwear, and ruminating over a sacred scripture.[130] Once the forty days were up, he continues, the

[130] "Aunque afectaba Benina no dar crédito a tales historias, ello es que no perdió sílaba del relato que Almudena le hizo. La cosa era muy sencilla, por él pintada, aunque las dificultades prácticas para llegar a producir el mágico efecto saltaban a la vista. La persona que quisiera saber, siguro, siguro, dónde había

reward will be that the penitent might be able--by pressing a small piece of paper to the tip of his or her tongue--to enter the local Bank unseen or invisibly and take all the money. The description of this ceremonial ends where the other had in fact begun, that is, promising a kind of monetary salvation. Although, this time, Benina will openly refuse to go through with it, gripped by the notion that this form of ritual would in essence rest on an apparent sin, irrecoverable in any faith.

Here, Benina's evaluating the story's content before even hearing its details (warning of the Moor's story-telling) might well represent the kind of distrust that would have met the promises of any Moor, or supposed one, in Galdós's Spain. But when the seemingly odd behaviors in the ritual Almudena proposes are enumerated, they are not immediately suspicious as they start with the forty day fast, which this readership would associate with Lent (one of the central observances of the Christian calendar). But yet, to the Christian in the scene, they will become more and more unbelievable. The novel's rewritten ritual thus associates itself with the kind of cultural dialogue through story-telling already characterized in this scene between Moor and Catholic or, that is, between imaginative storyteller and less certain believer. If an average reader would here see how a supposedly fixed doctrine is treated as an evolving, even feigned, cultural piety,[131] then

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dinero escondido, no tenía más que abrir un hoyo en la tierra, y estarse dentro de él cuarenta días, en pañosmenores, sin otro alimento que harina de cebada sin sal, ni más ocupación que leer un libro santo, de luengas hojas, ymeditar, meditar sobre las profundas verdades que aquellas escrituras contenían . . ." (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 214-15).

[131] The critique here would be more profound (and less iconoclastic) for a reader who may have been aware of the history of the ritual itself. That is, Lent has long been a source of controversy for the church in terms of its legitimacy and consistency as a tradition. In the earliest period or the beginnings of Christianity, namely, to which observances such as Easter and Whitsunday can be traced, Lent did not exist in any clear form, and would not be recognized as a formal observance otherwise for more than four centuries later. Lacking substantiating origins, it would continue to develop somewhat haphazardly being modified and re-modified in terms of its nature, practice, and duration over time and according to national whim and will. In the fifth century, the Roman church would require only a six-week observance with only three weeks of actual fasting. And it would not be until the eighth century A.D. that reformists would attempt to redefine it as the observance of a fixed period of forty days. Once forty was made the more standard duration it would seem necessary that there should not only be fasting during the forty days but forty days of actual fasting, but different interpretations of such prescriptions would lead to different

anything in the Catholic traditions, even the Virgin Almudena as a hegemonic tradition of a Spanish-Catholic church, could also be implicated in a kind of cultural evolution--one envisioned in the narrative or real. At the same time, the readership might also be taught to see a stereotyped orthodox figure itself evolving in the narrative into a more marginal and syncretic one, right before their very eyes.

The third ritual or rite in the narrative does similar work as it points to a religious symbol claimed in separate ethno-religious traditions, dramatically re-inscribing it culturally and again opening up how a fixed reference might alternatively be seen. In contrast to the other rituals, this one will have a clear beginning, middle, and end (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 235-40). And, initially, it will not begin until Benina has found its central player Almudena who has now, as an act of penance, taken up residence in the outskirts of Madrid. In her search, more of a mercy mission, she will take to wandering through a slum quarter of the Madrid suburbs, asking residents and passers-by for Almudena's more precise whereabouts.[132] At last, she will be brought by a local guide

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practices. For example, Pope Leo XIII (one of Galdós's contemporaneous Popes) in his proclamation for the Jubilee year 1886, would proscribe the stricter observance of the full forty days, stating that a good Roman "must also fast for two days, only using the food usually allowed in times of penance, in addition to the forty days of Lent and other days set aside by the Church as fast days." In more modern times, especially since the Second World War, the general trend would be for the church to deviate from this prescription to sanction both reduced hours of fasting per day and a less strict diet upon breaking the fast in the evening. But yet, given its history as a derivation or development, that is, what measure might there in fact be to determine if modification of this sort might rather imply moving away from the church tradition or returning to its roots? Thus would be Galdós's point here, I believe, but on a more erudite level in the analogous context of the ethno-religious history of Spain. While these insights are my own, the history was drawn from Herbert Thurston's "Lent," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1910, New Advent, 10 June 2007 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/>.

[132] This wandering or searching in fact plays out in the narrative in three parts or episodes or, borrowing a phrase from the text, what I will call "escapatorias" or "escapes"--thus shading the religious content differently. In this first "escape," Benina will not in fact find Almudena but will be uplifted in the more rural setting, despite the poverty that she finds there. In the second, she will stop to feed and care for a sick child and some locals and, then, afterwards, go on to find her cohort observing his ritual on a symbolic Mt. Sinai (this being the ritual that I will analyze here). And, in the third, she will undertake to feed some more locals (but less successfully this time) and will face a communal backlash, even after leaving the scene and rejoining Almudena on his mound. I will discuss the significance these escapes mainly in my chapter "Benina's Denial of the 'Saint' in St. Rita."

to the edge of a dumping ground. And, on a fairly high debris-ridden mound formed there, she will spy Almudena.

Navigating her own way up its slope, toting a basket of food for his physical salvation, she will find her companion in a prayerful trance. Not one for eccentricities, prayerful or other, Benina at first breaks into his state, expressing her concern for his new lodging, but the blind man offers a needed clarification:

> "He venido--dijo al fin la mendiga [Benina]--porque me pensé, un suponer, que estarías muerto de hambre.
>
> Mí no comier...
>
> ¿Haces penitencia? Podías haberte puesto en mejor sitio...
>
> Este micor... monte bunito.
>
> ¡Vaya un monte! ¿Y cómo llamas a esto?
>
> Monte Sinaí... Mí estar Sinaí." (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 236)

What seems nothing more than a garbage heap in the eyes of Benina then, will be lent the form of Mt. Sinai or the familiar historical-religious mountaintop, where Moses, for example, received the Ten Commandments or God's law. Looking to engage his companion in this kind of higher order of experience, bringing religion into play in an unexpected locale, Almudena will then perform a series of acts that all seem pious enough, but none of which collectively belong to any single religion that he knows. He croons a song in Arabic while strumming his guitar (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 237). He professes a belief in one God, addressing that God by the Hebrew "Adonai" ["My Lord"] (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 239). He recites prayers in an ancient Jewish tongue.[133] And, later, inviting Benina herself to participate in a ceremony (a

[133] "Aún prosiguió recitando oraciones hebraicas en castellano del siglo XV, que en la memoria desde la infancia conservaba . . ." (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 240).

personal covenant) that she would readily recognize as part of her own religion, he asks her "¿Casar tú migo?" ["Marry me?"] (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 238) (he would have her leave her serving position in that house of needy, exploitive bourgeoisie to join him instead). But his intended, redrawing the terms in lieu of providing a clear answer, will prove not so easy as that to woo.

In this sequence, the notion of ritual as storytelling will be extended dramatically, although here the content of the story per se is also a negotiation about how signs and symbols themselves are to be interpreted. As Almudena as the storyteller here is questioned in his content by a more dubious listener, he will successively attempt to sustain belief by providing an engaging way in to a rich content. To lead his target audience now to the meaning behind Mt. Sinai, he starts with what would have certainly been a familiar signifier for Catholics, that is, the site of God's covenant with Moses and the Jews in Exodus (only to be replaced later by the New Covenant with Christ and His disciples). As his ritualistic invocations proliferate, Almudena brings together threads from various perspectives and traditions. He pulls from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to remind his readership that the signifier itself, as an Old Testament religious signifier telling a old cultural history, is already multivalent or rather, that it has relevance in all three Western faiths (specifically, as a site of divine revelation). But in the case that the revelation of that final point would be lost on the listener, he adds yet another example, a personalized analogy, by proposing a mixed marriage or the quite literal mixing of ethnicities and faiths--the marginal thus to be joined in this case with the hegemonic.

But, finally, will the meaning of Almudena's acts of syncretism still be lost, on protagonist and, moreover, on the reader? Benina's refusal to accept his proposal seems to confirm her as a more dogmatic rather than an enlightened Catholic. In this seeming confirmation, the novelist's rising critique may be signaled. That is, like its narrative

voice and interpreter Benina, Catholic Spain will have persisted in its own state of enlightenment refused--refusing most particularly to read new signs that might lead to other readings. In this way, Galdós will have taken, in the era of the novel, a dark-skinned Madonna and Christ child, an ornament of the center place of worship of the central administrative city of Catholic Spain, but as his own national historical-religious emblem in transformation.

Behind Almudena, the name, the statuette, the patron, the national construct, then, there lies a profound cultural gesture of denial, and one that Galdós will begin his novel by exposing. Resisting a more overt (or even iconoclastic) commentary or critique, the novelist opts instead for a series of symbolic readings, allegories rather, from which any good Catholic reader might deduce alterity, if only from the single familiar historical-religious image or network of images found within those readings. By the means of this symbolism, a reader would find profitable alternatives for the facts of his or her own socio-political world. The challenge as it occurs here in an implicit dialogue between author and reader and using a mutual religious language--but for less than orthodox purposes--will be to re-shape the identity construct of a contemporaneous Spain.

More specifically, in this case, it is from the author's sparsely drawn narrative Almudena and from Almudena's strange attempts at rituals that the reader would likely have been brought to understand in new ways the cultural signified Our Lady of the Almudena and the Moorish wall in which she lay hidden and from which she took her name. Making this new understanding possible, this reader would receive in short order from the narrative several correctives: from "Jai" turned "Mordejai," they recover a Jewish prophet with religious and political motivations; from "forty days of penance," they understand a Lenten fast (although as a rather arbitrary proceeding), and from "Mt. Sinai," they realize that a monotheistic religious experience or place may be recalled as

more pluralistic. But I argue that it is the reinforcing effect of all of these pieces of religious iconography, rather than the understanding of each part in isolation by which the reader would have been nudged to move through the various and layered re-associations of their Catholic patron and cultural-historical correspondences, to the end of seeing the master narrative of their history and their national identity in potential transformation or, at least, questioned in its stability.

This kind of cultural-critical transformation may be most profitably shown, the author clearly believes, by starting with the case of the most orthodox and stable of cultural-religious referents, namely, the Catholic Virgin. Once placed thus and represented in the novel as a marginally religious Almudena who begins to suggest referents to religious sentiment and morals outside of Catholicism, the figure of the Virgin itself will become all the more charged with the possibilities of social critique. Her exotic name, her skin tone, even her nickname or diminutive la morenita reflecting that color are restored as symbolic markings with historical referents, not just saintly attributes. Re-charged as such, particularly within a racial context,[134] she now conveys a sense of the more diversified cultural-religious alternates that Spain holds as a nation.

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[134] As a dark Virgin, Almudena may be located in a widespread Catholic phenomenon or tradition and as a source of critical-historical debate (N.B., she would fall outside the tradition of African representations or that of black Virgins). Prior to the mid-twentieth century, the standard view was that dark Virgins were accidental phenomena, darkening by age and candle soot. But a new foundation was laid that would question this dismissal. For example, Monique Scheer is informed by that current of thought in her "From Majesty to Mystery: Change in the Meanings of Black Madonnas from the: Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries," The American Historical Review 107.5 (2002): 40 pars., History Cooperative, 6 April 2009 <http://www.historycooperative.org/>. She looks at both dark and black Virgins in a German-Catholic context making a case for dark Virgins particularly existing as enigmatic constructs of a post-Reformation church and becoming racial charged figures. Notably, the critic will point to the fact that from the early-nineteenth century, when the church itself would be reclaiming the traditional figure of Mary as white, some dark Virgins would be in fact be re-portrayed as white. My own research has indicated that this phenomenon may well have impacted the Virgin Almudena but in a later period. Namely, there is now housed in the crypt of the Almudena Cathedral a representation of the Virgin as a pure white figure in a painting dated from the early twentieth century. Whatever the precise moment of this Almudena's transformation, such moves in the contemporaneous century more generally would certainly have looked like the kind of history that Galdós in his work would have been at pains to counter.

Galdós thus tries to reclaim as plural and politically challenging what his contemporaneous church has rendered dogmatic. And, in this way, his Virgin could potentially critique or challenge the relation of that church to a particular kind of Spanish nationalism at a very particular moment in its religious and socio-political history, or when Spain was in the midst of questioning its status as a national contender in the international race of a new kind of Reconquest. By evoking a dark Virgin in this time of great political and ecclesiastical need, Galdós himself would be performing a kind of ritual, in the sense of making a repeated demonstration to communicate with and reinforce cohesion of social thought in his readership. In this moment particularly, he would seem to be asking his Spain to look into the face of its national emblem and to reconsider its present circumstance in light of its past, or, perhaps, its historical others as its more nationally defining sisters and brothers from alternate religious pasts.

A Note on a Contemporaneous Institutional-Religious Shelter for "la morenita"

The reading I have proposed for Almudena departs from the typical reading of Almudena as the referent for religious or spiritual confluence, even from the perspective of a cultural-critical monotheism. Yet it differs from those readings, particularly more orthodox ones, chiefly by asserting the need to re-contextualize the religious forms and attributes of the character and by assuming that the religious may implicate the political. I have reconstructed a most probable first impression, if you will, of the character on a contemporary readership--a readership moreover enmeshed in a Catholic cultural context or a Catholic religious imaginary. As the Almudena within the novel makes an unmistakable reference to the Madrid patron, a Marian advocation, Our Lady of the Almudena, the character himself would first appear "Catholic." But, thereafter and almost immediately, he is brought into more direct correspondence with other stories of the

Virgin herself, relating a marginal social figure in the novel's space of reality to a cultural icon, to figure a larger political issue, that is, the underlying discrepancy between a emergent national Spain's hegemonic history and its marginal one. Thus, and in a kind of double figuration, Almudena's own unmasking as a mixed ethno-religious signifier, revealed in his ritualistic antics, holds critical potential as it asks readers to see behind the stereotypes and correct their initial more hegemonic assumptions.

As a final point in this reading of Almudena, I will now turn to further characterize Galdós himself as a possible religious writer and a socio-political commentator and critic. I do not mean to imply by this pairing of the religious with the socio-political that Galdós has taken up the role of the old anticlerical author, which a more liberal scholarship has traditionally found in him. Taking the author as anticlerical when he is being socially engaging or polemical assumes that the religious thematics that he employs cannot be used affirmatively for other purposes than those of the institutional Church, or that they have been exhausted and thus sterilized in their religious aspects, to the extent that they cannot be reclaimed the vehicle of combat vis-à-vis the institutional powers. Such readings critique religion to the point of disparaging its force in culture or even destroying or acting in unthinking iconoclasm about religious elements that have long histories behind their current appearance. My argument has attempted to show how, conversely, a strong social critique may also profitably engage a Catholic readership--making a progressive commentary by means of, and not in spite of, the resources of religious culture. That a cultural archive is shared between author and readership does not mean that the hegemonic forces trying to control that archive will succeed in controlling how that archive's references are used.

The burden of proof for the case of the critique that I attribute to Galdós and his Almudena lies not only with the historical forms of the Virgin Almudena herself, as I

have read their implications here, but also in the theological role attributed to her by the church--as critical mediator, middleman, conduit, or tool in assisting individuals in finding the grace of God. If Galdós were to remain affirmatively religious here, to follow the Church (or specifically to counter her), then his images of the Virgin would need to stay intact in a traditional religious sense, even as she becomes secularized and even politicized in her novel. How might this be achieved, and how the figure might remain legible as it is being pluralized by the author? Or has it in fact been achieved here in the novel? To answer these questions, I have pointed her to a larger church theology and politics of the era. That is, Galdós's use of the Marian figure, as I will suggest, would not have been purely an aesthetic choice, but rather a very strategic act of cultural politics.

History confirms at least the possibility of my reading. In the novelist's century, particularly, long running ecclesiastical debates on how Mary was to be venerated, falling under the rubric of Mariology, would come to a head--the question of alternate devotions, such as those expressed by Almudena in the novel, were in fact topical. The church would be obliged by its pious and more conservative elements to pronounce formally on the cause of Mary, especially on the issue of her Immaculate Conception, that is, her own absence or freedom from original sin from the time of her conception (see my Introduction). While this pronouncement would exalt Mary within the formal church, as she would thus share a privilege of Christ, it would be a large doctrinal leap in the perspective of many publics. It would not only challenge the sanctity of Christ, and God then, as most high; but it would sanction more and more varieties of ways in which that sanctity could in fact be challenged. Believers or needy could now turn to Mary as a most, perhaps the most, efficacious intercessor (i.e., one who in her mortality would empathize with their plights, and one who thus exalted would be certain to have the close ear of the Lord).

Towards the end of this century and at the time of publication of Misericordia, Church activity in recognizing new Marian cults and in the formalizing of others was proliferating. They would most notably include the acknowledgment of Mexico's Our Lady of Guadalupe.[135] Her popularity and recognition would be key, I claim, to understanding how Almudena, as she is deconstructed and redeployed by the Galdós narrative, might be seen as both orthodox and reformist. Before explaining the circumstances of the correspondence of the two Virgin's and their legendary faith stories, I first recall Guadalupe's legend (below), as the vision appearing to St. Juan Diego (one of the first, if not the first, indigenous figure to be raised to sainthood; beatified 1990, canonized 2002), as an icon left to his parish, and as an impressionable cult that grew up around both manifestations.

The vision of Guadalupe may most fundamentally be read as expressing a simple test of faith undergone by a new convert accepting Catholicism in 16th-century Mexico.[136] Traditional accounts, for the most part unvarying, tell of an Indian man Cuauhtlatoatzin, a pagan, who in his later years would convert and take the name Juan Diego. Not long after, in 1531, Juan would be descending in a hurry down from Tepeyac

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[135] It is worth noting the existence of a Marian advocation of the same name "Our Lady of Guadalupe" but associated with the autonomous community of Extremadura, Spain. Similar to the Virgin Almudena, Guadalupe has strong ties to Spain's period of Moorish Conquest. At that time, priests fleeing from the occupation of Seville were to have buried her devotional image near the Guadalupe River. Centuries later, she would appear to a cowherd on that same spot. Thereafter, King Alfonso XI would be the first monarch to strongly promote the Guadalupe cult, and the shrine built in her honor would become one of the most important in the medieval kingdom of Castile (today, it is known as the "Real Monasterio de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe"). Despite national ties and other parallels of Almudena to the Guadalupe of Extremadura (who is a dark Virgin), her parallels with Mexico's Guadalupe (who is also a dark Virgin) are still more relevant to the point I am making here because the popularity of her original vision was not only expansive but, moreover, was renewed by the Pope contemporaneous to Misericordia's publication. I am informed here by "Leyenda de la Virgen de Guadalupe," Real Monasterio de Santa María de Guadalupe, 2 August 2009 <http://www.monasterioguadalupe.com/> and by Hall and Eckmann, Mary, Mother and Warrior: The Virgin in Spain and the Americas 12, 39-40.

[136] For this history, I rely mainly on Jones, "Our Lady of Guadalupe," Patron Saints Index and A. M. Garibay, "Guadalupe, Our Lady of," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries. 10 June 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

hill to hear Mass in Mexico City when he would be stopped in his path by a glowing vision of a (dark-complexioned; see below) Virgin Mary. This Mary would call herself "Holy Mary of Guadalupe" and would instruct the penitent to go to his local bishop and request that a temple be built on the hill in her honor. But the Bishop would not at first be convinced and would further request to be receive a sign of the vision's authenticity.

So burdened with spiritual tasks, and likewise with his temporal ones, Juan would delay returning to the site but would be nevertheless again be stopped in his hurried path by the Virgin. She would both reassure and instruct him in how to find a sign--how to gather the roses that he would find, quite miraculously, growing out of season and to take them concealed in his cloak to the bishop. When Juan would do so, the bishop this time would fall to his knees in reverence, for on the cloak itself would be permanently emblazoned a life size figure of the Virgin, precisely the vision described by the peasant that the Bishop had earlier ignored. Taken as a holy icon, the image itself would be taken in procession to preliminary shrine dedicated to the Virgin,[137] would later confirmed by commissions of inquiry, and would come to be venerated by the masses long before the church thus would bring her worship into an orthodox framework.

Looking at this miracle story first as an isolated portrait of a Virgin appearing outside of the church but then becoming sanctified, there are a number of crossover points that may be taken as legitimizing of my reading of Galdós's Almudena becoming notably more marginal or cultural-critical. As an subtle point of comparison, the Mexican Virgin will introduce herself as "Holy Mary of Guadalupe," a minimalist introduction,

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[137] Apart from the physical icon itself, the painting, dedications to Guadalupe would take many forms. For example, her shrine would be in place as of 1532; and her basilica; as of 1904. In another example, the town that would grow up around the original house of worship (3 miles northwest of Mexico city) would as of 1822 be known as "Guadalupe Hidalgo." By the latter's impacting the topography, it may further be implied that the influence or legacy of this Virgin would be more culturally dynamic. My source for the history here is G. Lee, "Shrine of Guadalupe," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1910, New Advent, 10 June 2007 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/>.

much as Galdós's Virgin is introduced simply as "Almudena"--in both cases thus with the figure claiming a name from the start assume a more significant point of comparison from a detail that does not always run so for all Virgin apparitions (e.g., Our Lady of Lourdes did not announce her name immediately). And, as I have already demonstrated, for Galdós there is a lot in fact in a name. These names particularly will share a common origin that is significant here, that is, "Guadalupe" derives from Spanish-Arabic (but may represent certain Aztec sounds) and "Almudena" derives, as already noted, from Arabic. Named overtly in such ethnic terms, both advocations maintain a certain association with the "foreign" or, moreover, "multicultural" and not necessarily what is more orthodox Catholic.

Apart from names, though, the overt connotation of the dark skin tones in common between the Virgins would suggestively link this vision with the revised Spanish one in the sense of more ethnically indigenous traditions. It should be noted that both Guadalupe and the Virgin Almudena, the cultural-religious figures, are considered part of a subcategory of "dark," as opposed to "black," Virgins (the latter being grouped separately). Only for the Virgin Almudena will this sub-categorization become truly problematic. Guadalupe's brownish skin, though not as consistently mentioned in accounts, is nearly always represented in religious art. As for the Virgin Almudena, who carries the indicator of color in her very nickname la morenita, she has been used otherwise, to tell a hegemonic version of the Reconquest story. The difference here is that in the Guadalupe story the ethno-religious reflection is more obvious and continuous--she is a dark-skinned apparition envisioned as such by a dark-skinned penitent, an Indian. In the original Almudena story, there is no immediate reference point of the vision of her as mirroring cultural ethnicity and religion. Her color as referring to ethnicity lies far back in time, and so tends to get lost or buried in Spain's master narrative of history (after all,

in the years following the Reconquest both the Jews and Moors are officially ousted from the nation). When Galdós critiques this vision, or at least calls its bluff, by applying the name to the type of the Moorish Jewish marginal personage found in the Madrid streets, he is adding back to his Virgin her element of color, as I have already implicated. He does so by recalling a part of that lost history and, moreover, I add, by echoing the kind of visitations of an ethnic Virgin that Guadalupe epitomizes. If the narrative Almudena is then Spain's Virgin, she appears in the novel to Spain as a reflection--not of what it has made itself into or as a Spanish-Catholic monolith--but as what its history would more precisely indicate it to be.

Almudena and Guadalupe have thus iconographic parallels that can illuminate the Galdós narrative as a kind of orthodox manipulation of the narrative resources available within a more general Catholicism. Remembering the Guadalupe cult as an early development that was continued in nineteenth-century Spain will make further implications about this manipulation within the contemporaneous moment. The cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe would originate during the first wave of European exploration, when Catholic Spain would lay claim to and evangelize most of the territory of Central and South America. The penetration of Catholic peoples and ideas into the indigenous and pagan populations already settled there would create a meeting of cultures, where two or more cultural-religious traditions would come into frequent conflict or tension with each other (as the meeting or clashing of disparate religious emblems, totems, symbols, rituals, narratives). The church itself would often try to diffuse or resolve such conflicts by a method of symbolic inclusion that would incorporate the marginal into the mainstream.[138] Thus the original vision or appearance of Guadalupe may well have

[138] Here that marginal element would be pre-Colombian and African imagery in the Virgin's story and figure. My source for this information is William H. Beezley, "Religion and the State: Latin America,"

undergone in its own transformation to reappear as a Catholic relic of some other local god. At best, this gesture could represent the church's attempt at a cultural-religious synchronization or blending of beliefs, popular practices, and ethnicities. And, at worst, it would look like a kind of cultural appropriation, accomplished by overlaying one tradition with another, in which local religions would ultimately come under the larger semantic umbrella of Catholicism. In this way, figurations such as Guadalupe would likely have been more be powerful vehicles for evangelizing than, for example, imported images of saints or borrowed Virgins.

In the later nineteenth century, Guadalupe would be reused again as a church symbol--the cultural significance of which Galdós could easily have experienced and appropriated in the strategic development of his narrative Virgin. Why such measures had become desirable and appropriate for the church is probably straightforwardly political. While the institutional church, or more particularly the Papacy, had seen the loss of all church temporal power in the Papal States by 1870, including Rome, the new pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) would, however, notably see the expansion of Catholicism and of the Catholic hierarchy outside Europe (e.g., North Africa in 1884) in the period of the second wave of European exploration and colonization.[139] This latter Pope would be at pains to reconcile the disparate cultural sites of the Roman-Catholic church and its papacy with emphasis on both securing a place for the church in the now democratizing nations, namely, the Latin American territories (most of which had become autonomous by 1824).

New Dictionary of the History of Ideas, 2005, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 10 June 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

[139] My sources on church history are the following: "Leo XIII," in Matthew Bunson, The Pope Encyclopedia: An A to Z of the Holy See (New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1995); "Leo XIII," The Oxford Dictionary of Popes, 2006, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 11 June 2007 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>; U. Benigni, "Pope Leo XIII," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1910, New Advent, 10 June 2007 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/>; and J. M. Mayeur, "Leo XIII, Pope," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 10 June 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

He would also try to expand church jurisdiction and holdings elsewhere, thus re-integrating the church into an international politics, even though it was no longer itself a proper nation-state. Articulating a rhetoric of Christian social policy (e.g., guarding against civil injustice and the destruction of faith in an age of liberalism), this Pope would choose to frame his project overall as a recuperation or reunification of the church's "separate brothers" ("Pope Leo XIII," Oxford Dictionary of Popes).

In this move, not surprisingly, Leo would champion the cause of Guadalupe, a past symbol of cultural syncretism, moving forward her formal role within the church, most significantly, by ordering the crowning of her sacred image (1887), approving her Mass (1894), and initiating a coronation ceremony for which he would send his personal delegate to the Virgin's site in Mexico for the ceremony (1895) (Lee, "Shrine of Guadalupe," The Catholic Encyclopedia). This gesture specifically, accepting her cult as canonical, would be the equivalent of putting a new spin on or revamping an old signifier for a new age. No longer would Guadalupe evoke a Spanish-Catholic appropriation of the culture of its colonized historical other,[140] but now the other had its own ethnically charged dark skinned Virgin who would be crowned as an important intercessor for Catholics--a crowning that would mean in Spanish perspective that this other had penetrated into mainstream culture. This appearance of the Virgin would no longer look as an appropriation of the Old World's symbol by the New. It would rather now seem to be another manifestation altogether and a sign, moreover, that the new continent's church that had somehow become more integrated or mestizo. Thus would be the precedent set contemporaneously that would enable the existence of Galdós's ethnic Virgin.

[140] N.B., Hernán Cortés (1485-1547), famed conquistador of Mexico, is understood to have perceived the Indians as Moors (see, e.g., Hall and Eckmann, Mary, Mother and Warrior 59).

The social critique or, rather, the method of making such a critique that I emphasize here is perhaps the most crucial element of Galdós's Almudena that other critics have ignored. As I have shown, the figure gestures at its own discrete social or political critiques, shifting its locus of meaning thus from the religious to the political or secular, yet all the while maintaining clear and largely correct, non-transgressive readings of religion. Specifically, Galdós's Almudena recollects the Catholic Virgin, the blessed mother herself, but moves Madrid's patron away from the control of the cathedral and reconfigures her story as ethno-religiously syncretic--thus seeming to rectify that story with a rather ethnic looking icon and with the familiar name la morenita, By way of this religious rewrite, then, the novelist marks his Madrid as a culture in need of a miracle (if it, like Mexico, it will be able to assert itself within the Catholic church). But a miracle will also imply reform, of the kind that could reclaim a different image of the Reconquest or, more generally, dispel the myth of Spanish-Catholic homogeneity. Thus, as I contend, Galdós redraws the Virgin, a supreme figure for both church and state, so as to redraw national lines of ethnicity and religion within his Spain and so as to remap the national identity of that Spain by means of the very church imagery, which it has long used to define itself otherwise. The author thus intercedes to create this secular miracle by attempting to reconcile Spain's national hegemonic history with its suppressed variant--his Virgin is the patron of the poor and the destitute, not just of Spain's bourgeoisie--and by implicating the variant itself as containing a more complete account of what his Spain in his time in fact was or had become.

While making such an argument, Galdós will not however go so far as heresy by moving the Virgin Almudena, his original creation made on the basis of the religious imaginary adopted by the institutional church, into the territory of iconoclasm. He adapts, rather than destroys, the religious icon. And he prefers to remain at least nominally

accommodating or faithful to the church's historical-religious polemics in an era when that church was sorting out beliefs about the central figure Mary, giving Galdós as an artist thus a particular rhetorical opportunity. That is, he takes inspiration from the contemporaneous Pope Leo's project (a very traditional Church strategy that became active in his era) for his own--the one looking to meet the spiritual needs of a diverse people by re-establishing or institutionalizing the Our Lady of Guadalupe and the other looking to meet the needs of his own increasingly diverse Catholic work. And here, as if deciding that he, Galdós, in alignment with the Pope, had the authority to adopt or sanction or crown, if you will, yet another ethnic Virgin, the novelist could conjure up the national Spanish Almudena, but altered in much the way as Guadalupe had been, that is, theologically acceptable in conception but existing outside the conceptual boundaries of the known church.

This argument strategy, drawn from the contemporaneous church, is more secular than religious and thus more subversive against the religious traditions that it critiques. In this way, Galdós's Almudena emerges in the text as a kind of religious figure not accounted for by accepted scholarship on the author, given that such rhetorical religious argumentation strategies have little to distinguish them in aesthetic terms. Yet the readings I have offered here, now allow one to conceive of Galdós as a more strategic religious writer than these other critics have assumed. In arguments shaped to conform to some of the great religious debates of his era, he ensures his own ethnic Virgin a long critical existence in terms drawn to measure for the church, likely calculating that any theological opposition to the Catholic-Moorish-Jewish Almudena would have been difficult, if not impossible. If his version of Madrid's patron were questioned, it would create a public scandal, the rough equivalent of the Church denying the apparitions of the

pagan-Catholic vision of St. Juan Diego, which would anger those underclasses who have taken her as their particular patron.

What Christian ideologue or right-wing critic would dare argue about such a continuance or extension of religious doctrine or tradition? The Pope himself would have been hard pressed to fault with how the author figured his Almudena in light of church and national history. Galdós's Almudena, in this way, offered readers not only a critique of Spanish nationalism, built by historical-religious exclusions and appropriations, but also and moreover a functional lesson in how a highly politicized ideological tool of the state, the Spanish-Catholic church, could be publicly held in check by its own larger religious truths--to serve its faithful even as that might mean renewing its own vows and humbling itself before the vision of the very centralized and homogenous institution that it had at one time aspired to become.

Chapter Three:

Benina's Denial of the "Saint" in St. Rita

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the way in which Galdós intervenes in the religious consciousness of his readership, suggesting Misericordia's Almudena as the iconographical doorway to Spain's multi-ethno-religious history and identity. In this chapter, I will again suggest the presence of such authorial interventions, but in this case with respect to the novel's Benina and her dialogue with popular aspects of institutional Catholicism's theology. Here I will preface my argument by taking as a starting point foundational scholarship's reading of the character as transcendent or Christian (as opposed to cultural, as I will do here). I will then trace the response of a more contemporary scholarship as it argues the character to be other than a supreme and effusive representation of Christian good and claims her as straightforwardly identifiable with the Catholic patron, St. Rita. Following this review of contemporary scholarship, I will begin my response by re-reading a key scene that introduces the Benina-Rita analogy, pointing here to a representation accessible to a contemporaneous Catholic readership as a problematic, rather than a straightforward, portrait of this saint.

I will thereafter unfold the complexities of this analogy by exposing how the author reuses Rita's own popular epithet as a guiding principle for an extended narrative sequence that renders Benina's trajectory in the whole of the novel more critical and complex than earlier critics have supposed. In particular, I will decode a structure of three

miracles that would develop unexpectedly for the Catholic reader. Turning from close reading to historical context, I will make the case for this reading by examining how St. Rita was viewed in Galdós's Spain, namely, by focusing on the popular following of her impending canonization, most topical for the time. More specifically, I will reveal how and in what manner Galdós engaged contemporaneous audiences in ecclesiastical debates on canonization, by employing a then-current narrative logic that in his treatment would strategically shed doubt on the original saint material and hence on official religion in Spain. That is, Galdós's Benina modifies the contemporary portrait of St. Rita, and, through his refiguration of the Church's saint, the author makes a discrete cultural-religious commentary. He revises what the Catholic institution asserted as it transformed Rita into its own St. Rita and, in this way, challenges contemporaneous notions of sainthood, saints as cultural models, and the relationship of a people and its saints.[141]

The Critical Persistence of Benina as Saintly

As I have already indicated in my larger survey of scholarship on Galdós and on Misericordia, Benina has been a figure most commonly and advantageously praised as the central embodiment of Christian values and, moreover, as the representation par excellence of a transcendent Christ figure.[142] Her treatment in more contemporary scholarship has been less uniform and less conclusive. Nonetheless, two trends may be

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[141] My interpretation of Benina will take on clearer socio-political overtones but only as I map the figure's complete narrative arc. In this chapter, I treat only a portion of that arc, and so her figuration as a result will remain incomplete. Nevertheless, it will serve as an important bridge to my treatment of her in the subsequent chapter "St. Romuald, The Reformist Disguise of Benina and the 'Good Child.'"

[142] I have related this critical history in my chapter "The National Spaniard Behind New Criticism's 'Transcendent' Artist." In short, earlier accounts inflate Benina as virtuous and, moreover, as reaching a spiritual perfection or good (notably, in Casalduero, "Significado y Forma de Misericordia," Vida y obra de Galdós [org. pub. 1944]; Gullón [c.1957 / 1960]; and Correa [orig. pub. 1962]). Later of these accounts claim the character as more specifically Christian and as associated with features of the Christian savior, for example, as invocation of the life of Christ or of Christ's teachings (notably, in Ricard Russell [1967], Beardsley [1970], and Sinnigen [1978]).

most helpfully drawn out if we approach criticism chronologically. An earlier trend attempts to disclaim traditional readings of the character, re-labeling that reading as simplistic and absolutist rather than spiritual. Here, notably, as this scholarship challenges the religious figuration of Benina, so too is the integrity of the masterpiece itself--the critical reputation of the novel, as they see it, depends on praising its protagonist. A more recent trend has seemed to accept this less generous understanding of the character as a Christ figure but not the diminishment of the character herself as generally good, virtuous, or transcendent. And, in consequence, even very recent scholarship attempts to reclaim Benina as representing virtue, calling different religious symbols, especially her perceived correspondence with St. Rita, to support their readings. To amplify these two traditions, I will focus on the contributions of Kirsner, Mora García, Kirby, and John W. Kronik--the former and latter pairs of which will demonstrate each trend respectively.

After the period of maximum praise for Benina as a Christ figure, Kirsner will be among the first to counter this trend, putting the character's most notable ethical-religious features--those for which she has been romantically "canonized," as he terms it--on the allegorical chopping block.[143] He will strike at the portrayal by thematizing ironic tensions in the novel, both in terms of its use of oppositions (e.g., the two literal faces of San Sebastián through which pass genuinely charitable? or sanctimonious? churchgoers and the real? or invented? Don Romualdo) and in terms of the contradictory actions of Benina herself (e.g., she seems the hopelessly charitable provider toward her insolent employer Doña Paca but almost as insolently demanding in her monetary dealings with Almudena). In this light, the critic reasons that Benina could not come to embody absolute goodness but rather appears as questionable, a mixture of dualities, which he

[143] The critic calls here to precisely "abandonar los prejuicios románticos de la crítica galdosiana que ha canonizado a Benina" (495).

specifies as "lo serio y lo absurdo," "la virtud y el vicio," "la verdad y la mentira," and "lo inventado y lo real" (497).

Re-classifying the character in this way, Kirsner will adopt a theatrical metaphor, redefining her as a puppet or saintly deception perpetrated by the novelist and the novel in which she appears as a "comedia humana," which captures the irony of the diverse and oftentimes senseless or even amoral planes of human experience masquerading as virtue. This very original re-interpretation will however conclude by evading a natural next question, that is, "why the irony?" and proposing otherwise that "lo significativo es el juego" (499), or that the novelist's game of irony is justified as an aesthetic endpoint in and of itself. In doing so, the critic closes off the conflicted Benina from a potential role in a realist discussion of theological virtues in the world, as opposed to generally human ones.

While Kirsner does the rather indelicate work of removing the absolute goodness behind scholarship's living legend, Mora García[144] takes a next step toward reclaiming that uncertainty or duality in a more applied and realistic frame of reference. While not rejecting Benina as the portrayal of an authentically Christian experience, he will however reject the notion of the protagonist as realized in either an ideal or transcendent state:

> Benigna, por tanto, es la caridad encarnada en un personaje humano que responde plenamente a las exigencias igualmente humanas de aquélla, donde las semejanzas con la persona de Cristo sitúan religiosamente el tema; pero no veo una dimensión trascendente. (187)

More specifically, Mora García will posit Benina as the embodiment of an attempted but failed transcendence specific to states of human and national self-realization and downfall. That is, where the character for this critic will begin as confronting the

[144] See, particularly, the section "El amor en su dimensión religiosa. La presencia de Dios" (183-200), which focuses on Misericordia.

intolerance and dogmatism of institutionalized faith and as positing an alternative religion to subsist in an established socio-religious order, she will ultimately, through her retreat or self-marginalization from that order, fail at the task of bringing about social change.[145] In the light of Benina's status as abortive redeemer, this critic will again conclude by questioning Misericordia's own critical status as a masterpiece.[146] But, I would add, to persist in judging the character in terms of old standards of transcendence (even in this more social perspective) and to disregard her as an analogue to St. Rita would be to overlook the novel's claims to furthering a more defiant cultural dialogue or debate.[147]

Trading the focus on social relevance for the symbolism that was his predecessors' focus, Kirby uncovers a new reading of Benina that begins to give more serious consideration to the novel's religious references as somehow realistic. To do so, Kirby falls back on some ostensibly telling coincidences, moments in the text when Benina is drawn using details from St. Rita's iconography--namely, her given name "Benigna de Casia" as corresponding to "Rita of Cascia," Benina's "lobanillo" or forehead growth as paralleling Rita's head wound, and the protagonist's donning of black nun-like attire as reflecting Rita's ultimate vocation. Using the framework of these details, he traces the character's narrative sequences as representing a process of sanctification. For example, as Benina supposedly causes Don Romualdo's later and

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[145] "La Iglesia no es rechazada, Benigna se mueve fuera del ámbito eclesiástico a diferencia de Leré, Angel Guerra y Nazarín (fuera no es contra, como muchas veces has sido interpretada la obra de Galdós) y soslaya los problemas de ortodoxia eclesiástica para presentar un personaje 'del más puro caracter evangelico,' segun las palabras del mismo autor, con lo que directamente mantiene la posibilidad de existencia religiosa al margen de la Iglesia como institucón, por encima de la cual descubre el arquetipo del perdón, la rectitud y la serenidad de espíritu como expresón del amor que coadyuva a la convivencia humana" (Mora García 195).

[146] The critic acknowledges the real masterpiece to be Casandra, a work that is comparatively underpraised. He argues that Benina is surmounted by Rosaura, whose conception of religion does not need to function marginally (199-200).

[147] Also, to argue, as this critic does, that Galdós was a liberal held in check by his class and socio-historical moment--and thus as having failed at envisioning societal reconfiguration--would overlook the implication of the allegory of Benina as St. Romuald (to be discussed in my next chapter).

unexpected narrative appearance (a miracle?), and as she extends spiritual comfort to Juliana,[148] the critic feels that her title "santa" ["saint"] at the novel's conclusion should be taken quite literally. He continues that Galdós must have created these analogues to Rita in order to "identify Benina as a kind of modern-day saint" (99). Building to this point, however, his critique of Benina's sainthood will stop short with these initial and rather surface iconographical comparisons, recapturing in this way the figure as a Catholic saint but without reference to a contemporaneous Catholicism.

Also exploring how the narrative evokes St. Rita, Kronik[149] is particularly notable for returning to the earliest and, perhaps, least anticipated or remarked moments of her symbolic emergence in the text, passages. Putting under his critical microscope a scene already well-worked in the criticism, one of the opening scenes of the novel (i.e., Benina's first appearance among beggars and cohorts outside the Madrid parish church San Sebastián in Misericordia's Chapter 3),[150] he finds there the single detail of the character's lobanillo to be a subtle indication of Benina's association with this saint (an association only to be later further confirmed in the coincidence of names "Casia" and "Cascia"):

> En un giro inesperado que se conforma con el final de la novela, la metáfora se convierte en realidad cuando, muy entrada la historia y con motivo de la información de que Benina apenas sabe escribir su nombre se revela que se llama Benina de Casia (cap. 29). La transformación del lobanillo, que no deja de ser lobanillo, efectuada aquí en una sola frase, es la trayectoria que traza toda la novela con la historia de Benina. . . . una apertura al personaje que no queda

[148] Here the critic is referring to Don Romualdo or Misericordia's only represented Catholic priest and assumed figment of Benina's imagination who at last enters the narrative scene announcing an inheritance and to Juliana or the daughter-in-law of Benina's former employer who, racked with guilt, seeks a spiritual comfort from Benina even after she has evicted the servant. I answer to the question of Don Romualdo figuration, tying in a re-reading of both these scenes to my interpretation in my next chapter.
[149] John W. Kronik, "El lobanillo de Benina," Insula-Revista de Letras y Ciencias Humanas 48 (1993): 21-23.
[150] I will trace this scene in more detail and re-read it in a subsequent section of this chapter.

> retradado del todo--que no nace por completo--hasta la ultima frase de la novela. (22)

A fairly obscure point of entry to the character's sainthood, the critic assumes here that the lobanillo will operate not merely as a metaphor but also as a doubling of literary devices, a metaphor within a metonymy. In such complex associations, he reads Benina's head wound and the fragmentary physical description of the historical saint's head wound (likened to a "garbanzo," meaning "garbanzo bean" or "chickpea," by Galdós) not only as a signal of this holy beggar as a saint but also as transforming her low station into holiness and her grotesque, real attributes into signs of her transcendent status. Kronik will end by explicating the lobanillo as a prototype of an embedded imagery in which the author has transcended Realism and achieved greater artistry. With obvious recourse here to older aesthetic arguments,[151] his reading of the lobanillo as arcane nonetheless ignores its contemporaneous cultural reference for a Catholic readership that engaged with the canonization of St. Rita and so would be brought to judge the sincerity or irony of the author's gesture.

In such critical assessments, Benina begins as a transcendent and Christ-like figure, is thereafter rejected for her goodness, and finally resurfaces as St. Rita. Whether this evolution is more than nominal remains in question, given how closely it relies upon older, foundational criticism about its author. In older accounts, remember, Benina is most frequently read as a transcendent religious type (as ethno-religious or Christian) facilitating critics' reading of the novel as a spiritual testament, moving it from Naturalism to a more creative exercise of the imagination. In more current accounts, as a Catholic Rita, she will continue to be interpreted as exemplifying a personal evolution

[151] That is, Kronik implicitly engages here the notion of the novelist as garbancero, containing New Criticism's preconceptions of Valle-Inclán's gesture and entitlement of Galdós as an aesthetic defamation (see my chapter "The National Spaniard Behind New Criticism's 'Transcendent' Artist").

from human / imperfect to spiritual figure. In both older and more recent accounts depicting Benina as Christ or Rita, respectively, she emerges as the general saving grace of the community, but not fulfilling any more specific social or historical function as that savior.[152] Her new religious identities move beyond the fairly unspecific and overused Christ figuration, but the resulting interpretations will not take up the question of her Realism. To address that additional level in the novel that may in fact reshape Benina's overall significance, one must first consider Rita--not just as religious or saintly but also as referring to a particular religious context (to which I will now turn).

A Problematic Signifier for a Catholic Signified

Now seeking to evaluate Benina as more meaningfully circumscribed in a traditional Catholic context, I will start by taking up a scene already well worked in the criticism in regard to Benina's portrayal of St. Rita. Thought critically to confirm the character as the rather static figuration of this saint, this scene provides details that qualify these earlier readings by pointing to an additional set of references to contemporaneous culture. I will then argue Benina's depiction as this saint as initiating for the reader a more critical chain of symbolic associations.

The scene in question comes at the end of the novel's opening descriptive sequences (roughly, its first three chapters). In this introduction, the straight-shooting Realist Galdós will present a tableau of almost universally or humanistically pitiable types, all the while eschewing a sentimental aesthetic or sentimentally religious frame. In the novelist's treatment, notably, the local Madrid church San Sebastián, named for the

[152] N.B., some of the very passages or narrative rites of passage that Russell will use to claim Benina's depiction as a Christ, Kirby will reuse to claim her as a Rita.

third- / fourth-century martyr-saint,[153] will ironically become here the venue for a beggar's crowd depicted as an mob with a dangerous pecking order. That mob seeks its salvation in wrangling over the best position for a charitable handout, rather than waiting to be taken into the arms of the church. (Recall that in this same scene the author will introduce the blind dark-skinned beggar Almudena in rather sparse detail, compared to the other seven beggar portraits in it.) As the narrative eye falls upon the more bullying and the more grotesquely curious of this beggar class, a reader may not help but be taken in by a portrait of Benina's mendacity (she seems the best of the bad lot):

> Usaba una venda negra bien ceñida en la frente; sobre ella pañuelo negro , y negros el manto y vestido, algo mejor apañaditos que los de las otras ancianas. Con este pergenio y la expresión sentimental y dulce de su rostro, todavía bien compuesto de líneas, parecía una Santa Rita de Casia que andaba por el mundo en penitencia. Faltábanle sólo el crucifijo y la llaga en la frente, si bien podría creerse que hacía las veces de esta el lobanillo del tamaño de un garbanzo, redondo, cárdeno, situado como a media pulgada más arriba del entrecejo. (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 77-78)

At this revealing moment, Benina's own description and countenance will be explicitly connected for a reader with a saint--and not so subtly--in the phrase "parecía una Santa Rita de Casia que andaba por el mundo en penitencia," or "she looked like a Santa Rita of Casia walking through the world as in penance."[154] But how literally should the reader take the author in this case? If she is a saint in this scene, she is still in many ways a sinner.

Reading Benina as a general, religiously good figure, standard scholarship has adopted some convenient symbolic markers for proving the text's strict use of the St. Rita

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[153] St. Sebastián would secretly offer salvation to Roman prisoners by converting them to Christianity. My source here is "Sebastian M (RM)," Saint of the Day: January 20, St. Patrick Catholic Church (Washington, DC), 28 April 2009 (<http://www.saintpatrickdc.org/ss/0409.shtml#seba>).

[154] This translated citation is taken from Benito Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. Charles de Salis (New York: Hipocrene, 1995) 27. All further extended English quotations from it will appear with translator's name and page numbers in parentheses, thus as "Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: [page number]." N.B., I will generally offer my own, more literal, translations for reasons of detail and subtlety.

reference. However, these conclusions may be too limited. As an exemplary case in point, Benina's head wound has been assumed to be an embedded clue associating her with the saint's own wound and thus with the saint herself.[155] However, it will be useful in evaluating this assumption to look at the precise textual moment (cited further above in its entirety) that criticism takes as the key to this analogy: "[f]altábanle sólo el crucifijo y la llaga en la frente, si bien podría creerse que hacía las veces de esta el lobanillo del tamaño de un garbanzo . . ." (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 27) ["{o}nly the crucifix and the wound on her brow were missing, but she had a round wart . . . the size of a garbanzo bean / chickpea, which could be taken as a substitute for the latter"].[156] Here the equivalence of saintly wound to what is essentially Benina's abscess or garbanzo-like wart may at first seem credible to analogize Benina-Rita. Yet the certain doubt shed on the analogy will become clearer by further qualification of the cultural-religious innuendo surrounding the wound itself.[157] How to clarify it thus is very much relevant to the spiritual mystery of the patron saint as known commonly to the devout.

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[155] In the double analogy that Kronik points to here, that is, both (1) Benina's wart is St. Rita's lesion and (2) Benina's wart is a garbanzo, Kronik takes the latter as the standing leg of his argument claiming the wart as a binary device that is both humbling and ennobling for the character (22). Kirby centers his argument on the former, claiming the image St. Rita as determining of Benina's narrative portrait and purpose (99).

[156] It is interesting to note that the allusion that Galdós himself makes here to garbanzo is also reflected in his entitlement garbancero, popularized after his death by Valle-Inclán (see my chapter "The National Spaniard Behind New Criticism's 'Transcendent' Artist"). If an intentional irony might be assumed here, then a stronger case could be made for the name an understated or a more complex criticism on the part of the younger artist.

[157] As another case in point, Benina's donning a black veil and dress in this scene has also been used to implicate her as St. Rita, that is, by recalling the black habit that St. Rita was to have worn as a nun (e.g., Kirby 99). While a more or less reasonable assumption, this kind of assumed analogical piece of the saint's portrait again will tie Benina and Rita together only as a fairly non-specific analogy or casual stereotyping. That is, the black-cloaked Benina in fact wears the same colored garb as the mass of older women, although hers is "algo mejor apañaditos" (27) ["rather more carefully mended"]. To add a historical irony to this point, Adriana L. Plaza Karki notes in her Santa Rita de Chilecito: El genio femenino del siglo XX (Chilecito, La Rioja, Argentina: Gobierno de Chilecito, 2004) that Rita in her most ancient depictions (on the sarcophagus that held her body until 1745) appears in white veil and brown habit, and not in the stereotypical black (64,111).

Among the saints that occupy the Catholic religious imagination, the Italian St. Rita of Cascia (1381-1447)[158] has long possessed one of the most widespread followings and prevalent existence in the spiritual lives of Catholics (rivaling, in places, even the Virgin Mary).[159] She has existed as choice par excellence as a prayerful intercessor. That is, she may readily be counted on to be persuasive in entreaties to God on behalf of prayers brought to her, and so she will be evoked in specific times of desperation or

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[158] My sources for St. Rita's spiritual history in this section are the following: Joseph Sicardo's St. Rita of Cascia: Saint of the Impossible and Model of Maidens, Wives, Mothers, Widows, and Nuns, trans. Daniel Joseph Murphy, (Rockford, IL: TAN, 1990); M. J. Corcoran's Our Own Saint Rita (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1919); Willy de Spens's Saint Rita, trans. Julie Kernan (Garden City, NY: Hanover, 1962); Jacinto García López's Santa Rita, Abogada de Imposibles (Madrid: Revista Agustiniana, 2001); and Plaza Karki's Santa Rita de Chilecito. I have particularly consulted the account of Sicardo, a friar of the Order of San Augustine (OSA), whose work was originally published (as I have been able to determine) as Joseph Sicardo, Admirable vida de la gloriosa B. Rita de Cassia religiosa del sagrado Instituto de los Ermitarios de nuestra Padre San Augustín (Genova: A. J. Franchieli, 1688). Thereafter, it was republished with slight variations to the title in Buenos Aires, Barcelona, and Seville throughout the 1860s. And, most notably, it was republished as José Sicardo, Vida de la gloriosa santa Rita de Cassia abogada de impossibles, religiosa del Orden de nuestro padre San Augustín, 2nda ed. (Madrid: Joachin Ibarra, 1900), marking the saint's canonization (see a subsequent section of this chapter). Based upon this history, the Sicardo text best serves my purpose of representing a religious imaginary, that is, what non-scholarly contemporaneous readerships in Spain might have commonly known, and thus I rely mainly on this text for recounting the legend and miracles associated with Rita's story. For reasons of accessibility, I use and cite from the 1990 translation, references to which will subsequently appear as "Sicardo, Saint Rita of Cascia, trans. Murphy: [page number]" in parentheses. Otherwise, for basic historical data (e.g., Rita's biographical dates), Plaza Karki is generally more reliable, as her stated intention is to recapture certain missing or misinterpreted detail of the saint's biography. Moreover, her research is based in part on conformities adopted at a 1995-98 conference on the saint (102).

[159] The layered editorial notes on the 1990 translation of the Sicardo text offers a perspective on St. Rita's devotional following as growing within the US in last years of the twentieth century. For these framing evaluations, see "Translator's Note," "Publisher's Preface," and "Conclusion" and, also, the "Introduction" to some extended excerpts from this text reproduced online Joseph Sicardo, St. Rita of Cascia: Saint of the Impossible and Model of Maidens, Wives, Mothers, Widows, and Nuns, trans. Daniel Joseph Murphy (Rockford, IL: TAN, 1990), Catholic Tradition, 17 December 2007 <http://www.catholictradition.org/Cascia/rita.htm>. In this latter source, it is anecdotally noted that "[a]fter requests about Our Lady [the Virgin Mary], the second largest interest has been about St. Rita, especially so in the past three months [the summer of 2002], every letter except one had a specific request concerning the Saint. The exception was from a woman who wanted as much information as possible. This was the impetus to make room for a comprehensive directory for St. Rita." Apart from these impressions, García López in his Santa Rita also notes that in 2000, the centenary of Rita's canonization, she was recognized in the universal liturgical calendar, thus officializing the already widespread local celebrations of her feast day (May 22nd) (17, 22).

hopelessness or particularly to intercede in lost causes within the trials of everyday life.[160] While Rita is a saint strongly associated with intercessory miracles, there is also a more personal or biographical dimension of the miraculous efficacy tied to her figuration as a saint. The two dimensions are expressed in her standard epithet, phrased for Spanish Catholics as the "Saint of the Impossible"[161] and, often specifically for Spanish-Catholics, "abogada de imposibles," meaning "advocate (as in a devout's intercessor) of the impossible."[162] This feature of the saint may readily be attested in her popular representation or depictions within devotional culture. Most simply, in her iconography, she appears as a nun devoted to the mysteries of Christ's death and, thus, frequently as kneeling or gazing at a Crucifix or Christ on the cross. Yet also sharing the scene might be the images of bees, a bed tassel, figs, roses, or thorns--all having distinct religious connotations within the Church and the latter particularly referring to the crown of Christ's persecution. These images together remind us in symbol language of Rita's own well-known transition to holiness, from her very secularized life station of wife / mother /

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[160] E.g., matrimonial difficulties / spousal abuse, loneliness, parenthood, infertility / sterility and bodily ills / wounds, and widowhood.

[161] St. Rita shares this general patronage with at least three other Catholic saints, Jude Thaddeus, Apostle, "Saint of the Impossible"; Gregory Thaumaturgus, "The Wonder Worker"; and Philomena "Wonder Worker of the Nineteenth Century" (referring to the moment of popular devotion to her, not to her historical moment). My source for popular entitlements such as these is Jones's Patron Saints Index.

[162] In standard and popular expression, Rita's Spanish title almost always appears either as "santa" or "abogada" of the impossible (see the above titles of her biographies, N.B., Sicardo's Vida de la gloriosa santa Rita de Cassia abogada de impossibles . . . , 1900) and more rarely as "abogadora." English speakers may find this surprising because "abogado / a" tends to be translated as the specific profession of "lawyer (m / f)." On the other hand, "abogador / a" is probably closer in meaning to the English "advocator" or "advocate"--both of which are relatively more generic in meaning. But, in Spanish, "abogado / a" also in fact contains the sense of "intercessor" or "mediator," as does the English "advocate" in modern usage ("advocate" also specially applies to Christ as an intercessor for sinners). For the example of a typical translation, see "abogado -da," The Oxford Spanish Dictionary, Spanish-English / English-Spanish, 1994, but for further senses of the term, see "abogado, da," Diccionario de la lengua española, 22nda ed., 2001, Real Academia Española, 5 August 2009 <http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=abogado>. Also, see "advocate, n.," Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., 1989, OED Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 5 August 2009 <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/entrance.dtl>, specifically definitions 2 and 2b.

widow to simple and cloistered nun and, just as importantly, from that of nun to martyr / ascetic / mystic.[163]

The first phase of Rita's "impossible" transition, from secular woman to nun, is traditionally narrated as a series of trials: a child being opposed by her parents, a wife seeking to influence her ruffian husband and sons, and a spiritual servant of God reclaiming her rightful or intended vocation. As early as her infancy, it is said that Rita would already show herself to be unusual or even mystical. It would be observed by kith and kin, for example, that bees would fly in and out of her mouth without stinging her. As a small child, she would continue to develop as special or enlightened, converting her own room into a sanctuary for prayerful contemplation of the Crucifix and hearing the voice of God calling her to take up the religious life by entering a convent. Expressing her desire to her parents, she would nevertheless meet with a first obstacle on her path in her parents' insistence that she remain in the secular realm, that is, marry and be available to care for them in their old age. Respectful about what would be interpreted as God's will, Rita would spend many years of her life living out a conjugal drama. In a manner

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[163] Rita is not a martyr in the oldest sense of the term, that is, a devout bearing witness to the faith by suffering a public death or execution. Rather, she exemplified another kind of martyrdom, suffering a slow death in isolation. Death being imminent in both cases, the latter requires what is more broadly observed as an ascetic discipline of willfully restraining the desire for social comfort, against the natural reflex of physical self-preservation. Asceticism was a spiritual ideal upheld in the Roman Catholic Church through the Middle Ages, even while more violent forms emulating Christ's suffering were condemned later by Protestant Reformers. The church still teaches today that every Catholic (naturally inclined towards evil by original sin) must work to combat vice and demonstrate virtue and, thus, to achieve salvation through the daily practice of self-denial. Common fulfillment of the faith in this sense may call, for example, for fasting during Lent (see my previous chapter for a description of this practice). For an adherent such as Rita, seeking the closest relationship with God, self-denial is taken well beyond what the average Catholic might ever willfully confront. I am informed here by the following sources: "asceticism," The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 17 December 2007 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>; P. F. Mulhern, "mortification," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale. University of Texas Libraries. 17 December 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; and P. F. Mulhern, "self-denial," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries. 17 December 2007 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>. I will take up Rita as this model of saint and Benina as she redefines this model in subsequent sections of this chapter.

quite unmiraculous, she would become the mother of two sons, contend with an intemperate and unscrupulous husband, and attempt to reconcile both husband and sons to God. Later, her ties with that realm would begin to unravel--first, at the natural deaths of her parents, then at the death of her husband (murdered by political adversaries), and finally at the untimely deaths of her two sons.

Deprived of an earthly family so definitively, Rita would take her family losses as a sign or a sanction from God in regard to her own vocation. She would seek without further delay that which she has been forestalled in doing most of her life, that is, petition entrance at the neighboring Augustinian convent at Cascia. Reaching a seeming climax in her life, Rita would again meet with obstacles in her status as a non-virgin of advanced age and, specifically, as the widow of a man drawn into disputes of rival political factions, all of which would cause her petition to be denied.[164] In the face of this first refusal, the steadfast Rita would make repeated petitions, yet each time she would be denied. Still in no doubt of her vocation and with acceptance into the closed community seeming all but impossible, a resolved Rita would pray intensely to her patron saints. She would receive her answer upon waking from sleep one evening when she was led by these saints' apparitions, as guides, out of her own house and village, over a mountain pass, to the convent and into its locked interior. Once transported, one of her guides, St. John the Baptist (who led Christ into his vocation, as well), would address her evoking the rhetoric of the impossible: '"Rita, remain . . . in the garden of the Spouse whom you have so long and ardently loved. . . . [p]ublish that there is nothing impossible to God. . . . [t]he impossible is overcome on your behalf'" (Sicardo, St. Rita of Cascia, trans. Murphy: 67). The abbess of the convent was no doubt impressed by the mysteries

[164] This refusal is somewhat ironic as the convent was named for St. Mary Magdalene, a reformed prostitute and penitent of Christ's time.

surrounding this final petition because Rita would be admitted to the order without further delay, her servitude to God and his faithful finally being let to grow.[165]

The second phase of Rita's transition, from nun to mystic, is signaled by a communication or communion with God or Christ that would be translated through her concealed physical and spiritual suffering. Having been so tolerant of the needs and weaknesses of others, Rita would not permit herself the same laxity but, rather, would employ austere means, including physical chastisement, for her spiritual refortification.[166] When earthly austerities were not enough, she would turn to the divine, petitioning through prayer to experience Christ's supreme agony. These prayers did not go unanswered: Christ, it is said, cast a single thorn from His earthly crown by which the flesh and bone of her forehead were penetrated, creating a deep and painful wound (c.1441). In her suffering, Rita reputedly sought neither relief nor recognition from the other sisters (who did not understand) but, rather, continued to pray to Christ in gratitude. Even as the wound worsened letting off a foul and degenerative odor that would oblige her to retire to an isolated cell within the cloisters, Rita humbly concealed the wound's true source. But, at her death, her wound was miraculously healed,[167] and there emanated from it a diffuse aroma (an event later to be confirmed as the first miracle worked in her

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[165] A secular version of the tale is less miraculous but not short on impossibility. It recounts how an enterprising Rita first eliminated the risk (real or perceived) of political backlash on the convent for admitting the widow of a political victim. She facilitated the signing of a peace accord by both her husband's family and the family's rivals (Karki 101-21). This feature of the Rita story may also in part explain why she is claimed as the patron of local public functionaries in Spain. For a commentary on this patronage, see Fernando Campo del Pozo, "Santa Rita, abogada de imposibles y patrona de los funcionarios de la Administración Local en España," Religiosidad popular en España: actas del Simposium : 1-4. IX 1997, dir. F. Javier Campos y Fernández de Sevilla, vol. 1, Colección del Instituto Escurialense de Investigaciones Históricas y Artísticas 9 (Madrid: R. C. U. Escorial-María Cristina, 1997) 487-510.

[166] Sicardo indicates that Rita had long since taken up the practice, even in a conjugal state, of restraining her body from sexual impulse and of maintaining a spiritual chastity. She would observe three Lents per year, would fast the feast days of the Virgin and those of her patron saints, and would go so far as to burn an appendage or prostrate herself in the snow until the perceived temptation had passed (89).

[167] Her wound miraculously healed on a prior occasion (but only temporarily) as a result of her request through prayer to regain her strength in order to make a journey to Rome in the Jubilee year, or year of declared celebration, of 1450 ("Sicardo, Saint Rita of Cascia, trans. Murphy: 114-20).

name and said to reoccur thereafter when miracles by Rita's intercession were occurring). Moreover, the wound itself would come to be more openly understood as a stigmata or a vicarious suffering with Christ and Rita, coming from such unlikely and unchaste origins, as having achieved a life of extraordinary sanctity.

With this account, Rita's manifestation in the narrative now has a more discrete contour within the Catholic cultural context that would have been well known to any good Catholic reader of the time. From the perspective of this reader, Galdós's Benina here would seem to present a less than affirmative analogy to the saint--despite the fact that "St. Rita," the name itself, is explicitly associated with the character in the narrative. Troublesome for the Catholic reader, though, would be that the expected St. Rita lacks the saint's iconographical trappings or common emblems: the Crucifix and the head wound are either absent from or distorted in the narrative portrait, which would have been unsettling to the contemporaneous audience expecting a standard saintly apparition.

Particularly, the extraordinary head wound given to Rita by Christ is distorted or undercut in the narrative by being associated with a common legume, a link that begins to problematize the character. That is, the author points toward the possibility of Benina as a Rita but then fails to elaborate that analogy with a more convincing set of signifiers. In consequence, the Benina-Rita analogy, even at this early juncture, is itself left open to pose some essential narrative questions. Will the character begin to assume the role of St. Rita by undergoing her own spiritual transformation? Will the garbanzo be converted into a more appropriate sign or symbol of holiness, and, if not, what might be the reason that Rita may have been referenced in the narrative at all?

In reassessing Benina's first appearance, customarily taken as evidence of the analogy between her and St. Rita, I have pointed to a cultural tradition that often places such face-value reading in doubt. A resemblance that would seem appealing at first will

nevertheless pass quickly, as troubling subtleties in the narrative open up questions that might again be better answered by following Benina's narrative arc to the novel's conclusion. While certain criticism has already pointed to the problem that Benina is consistently treated as "too good" or "too holy," here I am adding the precision to this issue: there may be more to the "good Benina" than meets the eye. To recover what I would consider to be a more accurate reading of this figure will require considering the character as a potentially more complex entity than the snapshot or still life portrait of Benina drawn by Galdós in this early scene--the figure evolves through the novel. Moving beyond mere surface iconographical correspondences, another textual strategy becomes important for the narrative: a theological one. Tracing it allows one to recover a more meaningful cultural-religious symbolic marker in the representation of the historical saint and her novelistic alter ego, Benina.

The Testimony of Three Non-Miracles

As Galdós draws his Benina with an artistry that initially calls up the image of St. Rita, yet then withholds a clearer resolution of the analogy, he draws his initiated readership further into the narrative problem through their faith. Looking for what it might mean for a Saint of the Impossible to be recalled in the narrative, this readership would be attuned to certain cultural clues. Reduplicated in the Benina portrait, impossibility will in fact create a thematic central framework for the narrative as, more specifically, three overriding miracle-like sequences form a large portion of the character's narrative arc. Traditionally in the church, miracles or supernatural occurrences have provided evidence of sainthood for individuals living out exemplary

spiritual matrices, such as Rita.[168] Here the wonder-workings of the historical saint will be replaced by the plainer workings of the would-be literary one. This latter figure will operate within a socially constituted charitable system, a piece of human ingenuity colored by its own improbable successes and probable failings. As I will present these sequences below, they will generally raise suggestive points of dialogue with the traditional forms and tropes of the Rita figure. The first sequence will redraw the miraculous impossible of the saint in a new paradigm, the second will demonstrate an application of this paradigm, and the third, an apparent failure, will make a discrete criticism of the represented Catholic community as a kind of accomplice to this failure.

The first miracle sequence is signaled in the narrative by a recollection of St. Rita's own miraculous tradition. As it opens, picking up the narrative thread just after the initial scenes depicting beggars outside St. Sebastian's church, a dilemma is already in play that the reader is made aware of by Benina's confiding in a fellow indigent and apparent acquaintance, Almudena. As she takes him aside, she explains the urgency of her monetary situation and the sum that will keep her from going under, a "duro":

> "Tengo un grave compromiso, y tú, nada más que tú, puedes sacarme de él. . . . Soy tan desgraciada, que si tú no me amparas me tiro por el viaducto. . . . Es que hay compromisos tan grandes, tan grandes, que parece imposible que se pueda salir de ellos. Te lo diré de una vez para que te hagas cargo: necesito un duro." (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 89)

While a relatively modest request, as Benina will point out, Almudena in his poverty--perhaps greater than Benina herself--will contemplate the prospect of amassing such an amount with little faith that it is possible.

"Es mocha... mocha... --murmuraba el ciego volviendo su rostro hacia el suelo.

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[168] Miracles are phenomena not otherwise explicable than as works of the divine or of God as achieved through the intercession and prayer of a holy individual. The proof of them is but a part of the process for making saints with the Catholic tradition and the church itself. I will delineate this process in its other aspects in a subsequent section of this chapter.

> "No es tanto --observó la otra [Benina], queriendo engañar su pena con ideas optimistas--. ¿Quién no tiene un duro? Un duro, amigo Almudena, lo tiene cualquiera... Con que ¿puedes buscármelo tú, sí o no?"
>
> "Algo dijo el ciego en su extraña lengua que Benina tradujo por la palabra imposible . . . ." (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 89-90)

Qualifying this prospect here as simply "impossible," the beggar's word choice is significant, especially since the symbolic potential of Benina as the very Saint of the Impossible would still be rather tenuous in the narrative--it remains to be proved. As if prompting a reader to again consider the association, the word itself appears in the narrative as Almudena's practically undecipherable articulation, but one nevertheless interpretable by Benina. As such, the author would seem to place a certain syntactic emphasis on it (visually assisted in my edition by a different typeset), signaling it as carrying more than its typical meaning. More than typical here, I suggest, would recreate it not only as a cultural-religious codeword for St. Rita but, moreover, as the dramatic overlay for a kind of miracle sequence. And while the action to come in the sequence will be shaped by this notion of a miracle, whether Benina, the would-be literary saint, will intercede quite typically as a Rita is, however, another matter.

As the sequence will continue, running in scene fragments from Chapter 4 through Chapter 12,[169] the miracle worked will begin to be redefined as the modus operandi of an intercessor that moves fluidly in different milieus. In this role, Benina will first convince Almudena to hock his good suit; assist him in pilfering from his no-good roommate who has fallen into a drunken stupor; and redirect a small charity coming to her impoverished employer Doña Paca (whom Benina charitably supports). All of that being not so wondrous (but rather more conniving and resourceful) nevertheless leaves

[169] The main content of these chapters, recounting Benina's past days as a faithful but nevertheless wily house servant, presents a reader (otherwise left in suspense) with a mixed perspective on the ethical nature of the character and thus prolongs the answer to the question "will Benina make good on the loan?".

Benina with the duro that she needs to pay off household debts. But thereafter, the miracle performed will have its own repercussions, so that Benina will continue by lying about said donation and by pocketing yet again other monies coming to Paca, but this time to repay Almudena (for whom she will reproduce the original loan with interest). By the outer limits of the sequence then, this Benina as money grubber (as opposed to the picture of the more reverent Benina situated at St. Sebastian's door) will have enacted her own kind of impossibility, a miracle of sorts--and certainly so when judged on her own terms.

Acting within a rhetoric of the historical patron saint here, Benina will continue to develop a notion of the miraculous by speaking openly (and, in doing so, violating one of Rita's dicta) of the miracle at hand. In a revealing moment at the height of the above sequence, she will put the question to her peers of the harm as seen in the eyes of God of a poor soul's acting on a will to survive:

> Cada cual, en esta vida, se defiende como puede. ¡Estaría bueno que nos dejáramos morir de hambre, estando las tiendas tan llenas de cosas de substancia! Eso no: Dios no quiere que a nadie se le enfríe el cielo de la boca por no comer, y cuando no nos da dinero, un suponer, nos da la sutileza del caletre para inventar modos de allegar lo que hace falta, sin robarlo... eso no. Porque yo prometo pagar, y pagaré cuando lo tengamos. Ya saben que somos pobres... que hay formalidad en casa, ya que no haigan otras cosas. ¡Estaría los tenderos no cobran estas miserias, sabiendo, como sabemos, que están ricos!... (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 100)

Reasoning through her own musing, she considers that, within her poverty-stricken world, God himself might allow for individual action based on need. And for herself specifically, she reasons further that in the action that she takes to produce her own miracle there would be no moral abuse as any small theft or pickpocket would be redressed or re-converted, by the return of equivalent funds or goods, into borrowing.

For a reader less initiated, this sequence might only have demonstrated the level of poverty and desperation present in the lives of the novel's represented beggar class and may even have elicited a greater critical admiration for the suffering "St. Benina." But, for a reader with the cultural tools at his or her disposal for making a more precise comparison / contrast, it will alternatively reveal some rather significant divides between the two alleged saintly sisters. Most fundamentally, St. Rita as a wonder-working patron leading an exemplified spiritual life will contrast with Benina as an earthly degradation of the saint--one who is charitable, and even selfless to a degree, but yet without the historical saint's signature reticence and resignation that will win the favor of her spiritual father. As the narrative would retell a story of the impossible made possible, which the historical saint precisely embodies as a patron, the would-be literary one in this contrast would seem to dialogue with Rita more pointedly.

Namely, Benina will counter Rita critically on the level of what a Catholic would expect from this saint in terms of charity and miracle working. That contrast begins here to define a new and affirmative paradigm for this saint's more traditional attributes, modernized to a present context. The key to understanding this paradigm lies in the distinction of the notion of will that Rita demonstrated and that Benina represents. That is, respectively, while the one works wonders and facilitates the impossible by having submitted her will to God,[170] the other will achieve an impossible by acting of her own

[170] Characterized by a strong faith, Rita's impossible also encompasses the Christian ideal that comes of resigning one's individual will to God. This kind of resignation in the life of Rita is often retold by understated or common trials. For example, as a test of that faith, she would be asked by the convent's prioress to water a dead and withered plant. Performing the task without regard for its apparent futility for a year's time, Rita would be rewarded by procuring a miracle--the plant's resuscitation. In another example, Rita's resigned sense of the impossible provides impetus for the faith of those around her. At a moment when she was incapacitated by illness, she would receive a visitor, a cousin from her village, and would request that a rose be brought to her from the garden that she used to tend. The cousin agreed to the task, even thought it seemed unlikely to find a flowering rose in midwinter. Nevertheless, she followed Rita's explicit instruction and returned with the one rose clipped, precisely as Rita described, from an otherwise bare bush. The same miraculous occurrence would be repeated, but with a fig. For all of these miracles, see my source here Sicardo, St. Rita of Cascia, trans. Murphy (80-81, 123-25).

will and with a commonplace ingenuity. The self-motivated agent, Benina, moreover, will also attempt to engage each needy peer in a similar manner. For this reason, in her requesting a loan from the poorest of poor Almudena, there is the implication that this community member, as any other, needs to be reminded that begging at God's door and thus resigning himself is not the only way. And, further, in her return of said duro, there is the suggestion that--more than for any abstract moral obligation--her interest is in ensuring one more hand, as the character herself is made to imply,[171] in a kind of underground fiscal network--a community structure more adequate to modern Spain than alms.

In this example, then, of a chain of willed actions beginning with Benina, the Galdós protagonist would seem to orchestrate and enable a new ideology or theology of need, or what I will call "help thyself" after the more secular adage long in circulation "God helps those who help themselves" (the Bible teaches rather that "God helps the helpless").[172] Here, much as one might tap into the communal supply of pocket change and route it to the most urgent cause, each individual would personally assess need in a

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[171] "Y hasta otra, Amudenilla, que días vendrían en que yo carezca y tú me sirvas, como te sirveré yo viceversa" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 136).

[172] Popularly thought or commonly presumed to be a biblical adage, the appearance or the implication of "God helps those who help themselves" in the Bible is disputed. Proponents are hard pressed to find more than implicit references to it, as the Bible seems to more overtly teach an opposite principle. For example, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah declares, "God helps the helpless! For you [God?] have been a defense for the helpless, a defense for the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat" (Isa. 25:4). In secular sources, the adage has more obvious sources, namely, in both seventh-century BC fabulist Aesop and in the eighteenth-century American revolutionary figure and founding father Benjamin Franklin. In Aesop's tale of "Hercules and the Waggoner," for example, the Roman god Hercules would encourage action over praying to the gods for help. And, in Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac (1732-1796) the very "God helps those who help themselves" appears. As attributable to Franklin, the adage becomes a part of Enlightenment ideology, in which action was seen as recourse to prayer and prayer itself was seen as futile. To represent a common knowledge source for the adage and a common understanding of it, I have pulled this information from popular sources, e.g., "God Helps Those Who Help Themselves?", Catholic Answers Forums, Catholic Answers, 3 June 2009 <http://forums.catholic.com/showthread.php?t=117734> (a site hosting one of the largest online Catholic forums) and Paul Hehn and Fritz Holznagel's "Benjamin Franklin Biography," Who2.com, 3 June 2009 <http://www.who2.com/benjaminfranklin.html> (a free database of profiles of commonly considered famous individuals).

kind of grey ethical-religious system. And the currency of virtue in this system will not lie in not having money but in knowing how money should be released into and reused within that community. That being the case, the small theft may be justified: presumably, as long as a soul is willing to repay his or her debt and as long as the receiver is willing to become the giver on the next round. Moreover, this passage suggests that, in the contemporary world, the work of a saint may be found in a financial transaction rather than in the church alone, and Benina's loans, therefore, are the small miracles of which everyday lives are made.[173] In this way, in this kind of community microcosm of give-and-take, there is suggested a limitless promise of a cure for the hopeless or impossible cause.

The second sequence is again framed by a money transaction taken as a kind of narrative code for a miracle. This one entails Benina's extorting a loan from a fellow cohort (end of Chapter 21), and, as before, these earnings become the means by which she operates in the public sphere as a non-traditional patron of the impossible (Chapters 27 to 31). In the earlier scenes, Benina approaches "la Pitusa," a rather well-to-do street type and the proprietor of a cheep boarding house who will no doubt have the funds. Wasting no time with explanations, Benina greets her targeted lender with the following:

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[173] An anecdote from the life of St. Rita, recounted in a chapter in Sicardo "The Poverty that St. Rita Practiced," demonstrates further how the Benina story becomes an implicit rejection or revision of values typically associated with St. Rita. The story goes that, on the road to Rome (a rare excursion in a Jubilee year), St. Rita and her small entourage of sisters came across a single coin. The sisters felt they had been blessed. St. Rita, however, instinctively pitched the coin into a nearby stream. She would remind them in this way that the expedient disposal of any earthly temptation from the path of piousness will bring them spiritually closer to God. Thereafter, the author's commentary on the tale runs as follows:

> St. Rita believed, as Paul did, that all things outside of Jesus that do not help to gain Jesus are as filth and uncleanness. She was a perfect model of poverty. She was a true religious and truly poor, and the example of her life in the convent was a sublime hymn, so to speak, in praise and honor of holy poverty. During her long years in the Maddalena Convent, St. Rita was never heard to say: 'This is mine,' or 'that is yours,' for, having once put her feet on the step of poverty, the second step of the ladder of religious perfection, she only heard the sweet voice of her beloved Jesus saying to her: 'Come, Rita, I am poor, come and follow Me.' (Sicardo, St. Rita of Cascia, trans. Murphy: 86)

This is where Rita and Benina would fundamentally part ways. That is, the theological virtues that directed the saint's life will not be the virtues that improve the lives of Benina and her cohorts.

"necesito doscientos reales y tu me lo vas a dar" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 194) ["I need ten duros and you're going to give them to me"].[174] But, when it comes to the negotiating table that la Pitusa is unable to supply these funds, Benina reminds her that she has been Benina's own debtor in the past and, thus, to look deeper into her change purse, adding persuasively "Busca bien, maestra" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 195) ["Have a look, madam" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 147}]. Resourcefully, la Pitusa suggests that Benina hock two rings that she has stashed away and that, when Benina has the money, she can reclaim and return them with interest.

Securing a relatively substantial sum, the mendicant Benina now settles old debts with merchants and provides for her flock of bourgeois dependents in her own miraculous way.[175] But, even after these transactions are concluded, she will head off with her spare change to the suburbs, the slums, on a mercy mission to rescue the penitent Almudena.[176] (The miracles, thus, will not cease until the money does.) Proceeding here to search for one lost soul, she will nevertheless cross paths with another, Silvero. This unfortunate will relate to her the unlucky tale that his child had nearly been saved by the charity of a local clergyman but now may be found sick, at death's door. Seeing for herself, Benina indeed finds an ailing little girl lying on a filthy cot in a tenement house but otherwise corrects the man's original diagnosis: "Lo que tiene esta criatura es hambre" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 234) ["What's wrong with that child is

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[174] The English here is my own translation, which expresses more plainly the demand apparent in the Spanish version. The de Salis translation is more eloquent, but also relies on ironic tone. In this version, la Pitusa asks, "What can I do for you?", and Benina answers, "Just a trifle. Lend me ten duros" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 146). Note: the equivalency of 200 reales as 10 duros comes from the translator's text here.

[175] There is little delay between these negotiations, upon which Benina's charity rides. And with the transfer of goods barely concluded (she hocks the rings in haste), Benina hires a taxi for an incapacitated quixotic character, Ponte Frasquito Delgado, depositing him in the apartment of his fellow countrywoman and distant relative, Doña Paca. One more mouth to feed, thus.

[176] This money borrowing is thus part of the set up or precedent for the occurrence of the scene that takes place on Almudena's Mt. Sinai, which I analyzed in my previous chapter.

hunger" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 190}]. Hunger being an ailment that this saint can readily manage, she does so without letting any unfulfilled promise of salvation impede her own skillful resolution, With only limited funds, then she obtains provisions to prepare a simple soup for the child and distributes it among many of the starving residents. All in a day's work.

As Benina again handles in this sequence what the community feels to be impossible, she will continue as a kind of Rita or patron. Although putting her grassroots system of help thyself or willed miracle-working into operation among this wider and poorer public she will again call up some profound differences between the two figures, namely, in terms of context or spheres (public vs. private) of operation. As a measure of such a comparison / contrast here, one might draw from Rita's own miracle story that which would make a public woman into a private one (transporting her into the cloisters of the convent and giving her cause to further conceal herself or her marks of sanctity in complete confinement). But, also, worthy of note here, is one of the typical legends of the saint's miracle working, that is, the popular miracle story of St. Rita and the healing of a neighbor's child.

In this story, taking place while Rita was still living, a local woman of Cascia would come knocking at the convent doors and, being received by the saint herself, Sister Rita, would proceed to tell of her misfortune. She would explain that doctors had presumed her child untreatable, and that the child now lay dying in her bed at home. The consoling response that she had from the local protectoress would be unadorned but with the confidence that comes of having an unquestioning faith: "My good woman," said Rita, "have faith. God is good. Your child will not die. You will find her well when you return home" (Sicardo, St. Rita of Cascia, trans. Murphy: 105-6). As the woman hastened home in pious expectation, Rita prayed to the Almighty for the child's speedy recovery

and, with a miraculous efficacy that was true to form, the child would indeed be found cured upon the woman's return.[177]

Against the paradigmatic Rita in this tale of healing, the Galdós saint may be seen as denying the representation of a Rita in a specific way. The Benina that a readership might perceive, judged against the Rita they would know well, would not be so much a street figure or pickpocket as now a more outward reaching and active (miracle) worker, standing in contrast, as it were, to her reclusive and contemplative historical sister. This Rita will appear specifically in the narrative scene as cavorting with the underclass on their own ground, yet the demonstration of the mechanics of miracle-working or in the engaging of this forlorn lot in the work of saving themselves--as, in essence, a pedagogical act--will be crucial here. That is, in the case of Benina, miracles do not happen behind closed doors, as mysteries, but rather as practical solutions explained in terms that the target audience may readily understand (as resourceful cook or simple stew may appeal to paupers). Displacing Rita in this way would thus recreate the difference, in theological terms, qualifying the religious orders, between a saint such as Rita of a contemplative apostolate and a teacher-saint or one of a more active apostolate.[178] Moreover, though, this qualification would indicate a return here to a point mentioned earlier (see my critical introduction on Galdós), of which the novelist had been disapproving overall of a contemplative clergy. His evaluation of the church's Rita may have been no exception to this general rejection.

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[177] This particular tale is in fact reflected in a very ending scene of Misericordia, which would suggest that Galdós was not only familiar with the Sicardo text or the legend itself but, moreover, that the nineteenth-century author was actively dialoguing with this model. His vehicle for doing so, Benina, will have undergone some significant changes in religious inference by this moment, and thus the scene will be evaluated in this new context (see my next chapter).

[178] In qualifying the nuances of Galdós's stance on the church, Scatori has noted the author's common critique of the contemplative orders and thus of the church as highly institutionalized, cloistered, and cut off from its people. Likely, in this case, this critic would be underlying these differences in the two figures.

Still famed in the magnitude of a money transaction or la Pitusa's loan and thus with Benina refigured as a modern Rita on her own terms, the third miracle sequence will now layer an additional dimension onto this narrative negotiation with the Rita figure, referring to the miracle stories of at least two other diverse saintly figures. This sequence starts off by Benina's returning to look for Almudena in the suburbs, during which task she will pass along the same road and reach the same site where the cured child is found. There she again meets with a crowd of tenement dwellers, but a crowd particularly that was absent from the previous distribution of charity (of her soup). Sensing social injustice even in a curing miracle assumed to be of divine origin, this crowd will now petition for their fair share, claiming their right to be saved, from a Benina whose presence is assumed to be the reappearance of a legendary local figure of charity, Doña Guillermina Pacheco.

As explained in the narrative, Guillermina had been a charitable aristocrat who, maintaining fortune and status, had adopted a particular manner of distributing alms: she would dress in rags. For a time her charity had been a local constant and, for this reason, the locals entitled her "saint," even though she had not by any church prescription earned that title in her own right.[179] Now both titles would belong to Benina, if she would have them, but the new saint will answer to this popular attempt at canonization in another way:

> Contestó con gracejo que tan santa era ella como su abuela, y que miraran lo que decián y volvieran de su grave error. . . . algunos guasones de su pueblo se burlaban de ella diciendo que venía de Santa Rita. Total: que ella no era santa,

[179] "Confirmaron todos a una voz lo dicho por el octogenario Silverio, el cual hubo de añadir que por santa fue tenida la señora de antes, y por santísima tendrían a la presente, respetando su disfraz, y poniéndose todos de rodillas ante ella para adorarla . . . . En efecto: había existido años atrás una señora muy linajuda, llamada Doña Guillermina Pacheco, corazón hermoso, espíritu grande, la cual andaba por el mundo repartiendo los dones de la caridad, y vestíahumilde traje, sin faltar a la decencia, revelando en su modestia soberana la clase a que pertenecía" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 242-43).

> sino muy pecadora, y no tenía nada que ver con la Doña Guillermina de marras, que gozaba de Dios. (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 242-43)

Explaining here that her association with St. Rita had always been a joke and that the locals are now mistaken in judging her to be their Guillermina, she ends stating that "ella no era santa," meaning "she is not a saint"--thus to disclaim for herself more generally the persona of saint when she is enacting simple social charity.[180]

Despite the confusion of identities, Benina is moved again to compassion. She will purchase a dozen loaves of bread and, in a light parody of Christ's multiplication of the loaves and fishes, will multiple the Lord's bounty by distributing a half loaf to each pair of hands. This distribution, however, will come up short and, when it does, those denied their share let out a communal wail for more bread. Reaching her financial limits, the self-motivated savior will respond with characteristic selflessness, buying more bread. But this act still buys Benina little credit from the popular element and, even after offering another hovel apartment full of unfortunates the peseta that she could not spare, two haggard women ridicule this Guillermina proxy for her saintly shortcomings:

> detuvieron a Benina dos vejanconas, una de las cuales le dijo con mal modo: «¡Vaya, que confundirla a usted con Doña Guillermina!... ¡Zopencos, más que burros! Si aquella era un ángel vestido de persona, y esta... bien se ve que es una tía ordinaria, que viene acá dándose el pisto de repartir limosnas... ¡Señora!... ¡vaya una señora!... apestando a cebolla cruda... y con esas manos de fregar... Ahora se dan santas del pan pringao, y... ¡a cuarto lasimágenes;caras de Dios a cuarto! (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 245)[181]

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[180] Benina's response here will later become a repeated mantra or narrative refrain, more often being "no soy santa," meaning "I am not a saint." I will discuss the shades of its meaning (ultimately, as a socio-cultural commentary and critique) in the last section in this chapter.

[181] Here "apestando a cebolla cruda" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 245) ["stinking of raw onions" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 201}] is a further reference to Benina as a cook. It is not complimentary, but rather an implicit manner of continuing to de-glorify Benina as a sanctified Rita. Recall that, for Sister Rita, the decaying smell of her wound would cause her to be shunned by the other sisters. Thereafter, that smell would be converted into a sweet one, as one indicated of her sainthood.

In the apparent backfiring of her typical deeds and with local animosity now building to a climax, Benina tries to flee the scene, but the ungrateful throng demands a last purchase of bread. Making that purchase will, however, now be less an act of charity than a tactic to distract the crowd and to enable her hasty departure. Even after managing to depart that scene, the good woman, along with her companion Almudena, will be hunted down and stoned in a characteristic biblical punishment by a band of gypsies now calling her "santa de pega," meaning "sham saint."[182] Saintly rhetoric apparently cuts both ways in the mouths and minds of the greedy mob.

In the aftermath of the failed miracle, a further undoing of Benina's system will occur after she returns to the city. Having spent all of la Pitusa's loan now and without another borrower's funds to be had, Benina decides to trade on her appearance and make another attempt at begging with Almudena on the street.[183] To do so, she assumes the role of a blind mendicant, borrowing certain items, namely, an old black veil and green spectacles: "un velo negro, viejísimo, de Doña Paca, para entapujarse la cara; y con esto y unos espejuelos verdes que para el caso guardaba, hacía divinamente el tipo de señora ciega vergonzante . . . atacando con quejumbroso reclamo a media voz a todo cristiano que pasaba" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 250). But when she is caught begging on an apparently restricted thoroughfare, the infraction will land her squarely in the beggar's prison, el Pardo. With Benina now incapacitated (her shoes are confiscated), not only will her dependents suffer but also her loans will go unpaid. And the longer the loans go

[182] Before the first stone is pitched, that crowd pitches accusations. While barely audible from the height of the Sinai mound, they nevertheless turn up plainly in the text: "que si era santa de pega; que si era una ladrona que se fingía beata para robar mejor... que si era una lamecirios y chupa-lámparas" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 246).

[183] Another gambit: change parishes from San Sebastián to San Andrés. This venture Benina takes with Almudena, who convinces her of the possible advantage in it, that is, the possibility of sponsorship by a good parish priest: "porque . . . conocía en esta parroquia a un señor clérigo muy bondadoso, que en otra ocasión le había protegido" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 252). This move from a martyr's parish (St. Sebastian) to one of an apostle (St. Andrew) is also a subtle symbolic touch.

unpaid, the more risk that her borrower's circle, rather than circling back around, will remain open.[184] And longer the circle remains open, the greater the possibility that Benina might well be caught at her own game as her miraculous actions threaten to be converted into plain old thefts--moral impossibilities thus turning into what is socially undesirable.

As thus framed, as the apparent failure of Benina's own plan to feed the masses and to repay the source of the charity, this last miracle sequence will implicate perhaps most clearly the portrait of St. Rita as going unfulfilled in the text by Benina, even as that portrait might seem to have been redefined socially and secularly, within the freedoms or constraints of her newly devised system. Here, Benina's version of charity, while denying any supernatural force in her cure and reclaiming the co-operative effort of community, will nonetheless be dramatically undermined by communal expectations or the memory of salvation at the hand of Guillermina, an ostensibly better saint. By comparison, and from the perspective of this community, what Benina will donate in earnest will look as negligible, rather than as contributing to a real or possible solution, and her improvised dealings overall as rather unsaintly--not good enough in the way of intercession or aid for even the poorest of the poor. The religious scripts used by these mobs, in short, make them unable to read new social possibilities and to appreciate innovative solutions.

As the novel's central saint, the Rita in question, is denied by the needy in this sequence, this denial of one functional characteristic in a standard religious equation or what might have been a Rita-like salvation story (mysteries procured at the request of humbled souls) will be compounded. The novel's "deserving poor" will seem by this standard to be decidedly less deserving. Foreshadowed in the St. Sebastian scene, with its

[184] At the novel's end, the reader will still be left expecting this fulfillment by Benina's simple pledge: "[T]engo una deuda con la Pitusa, calle de Mediodía Grande, y lo arreglamos dándole yo lo que fuera reuniendo, y peseta por duro de rédito" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 317).

rough and tumble vision of the beggar's crowd (and of Benina within that crowd), the outbreak of mass penury and fanaticism occurring in this sequence as the poor demand a higher order of charity as their right and thus refuse a potential charitable distribution otherwise will serve to characterize a rather stagnated, despondent world, too dependent on miracles. This sequence thus presents another rather surprising portrait for a Catholic reader, who would have known the more traditional teachings and tales; the unconventional outcome of such acts of Christian charity might well have been interpreted as the symptom of a lack of faith. Benina would have supplied a different response in her own logic, that is, in her help-thyself or help-others-to-help-themselves manner--even as a more God-fearing crowd would have denied it as a possibility.

If a standard religious equation might here be transformed into a secular one because of its failure, as readers might see it, a more secular commentary might well be inspired to reflect back on the original equation and to critique it from a more liberal perspective--insinuating what is in fact wrong in the reality of Spain's poor with thinking in terms of Rita's rhetoric. As the populist in such social situations begin to measure charitable goodness or deliverance by what they in fact want to perceive as largesse, popular judgment itself looks as if failing to define "saint" quite clearly, or by any standard other than their own selfishness and laziness. In this way, a needy group of the devout may become a mob, rather than a community, grabbing at superficial salvation from any soul that would hold out a pittance to them and then declaring that soul to be a saint. Further, Benina could be a saint in this scenario only as long as her small wealth would hold out, because distributable wealth only flows here in one direction, unless the community would actually learn something from her help-thyself example. But this community continues instead to place its faith in their own construction of a savior, identified through a legend rather than by deeds--cash flow becoming the pivotal feature

deciding the worth of a holy life or individual. (As I read it here, this scene may have been profoundly disturbing for many believing Catholics. But while the author pushes his reader to a left of center position, he still provides the safety valve of the "failure" of the miracle or more generally Benina's "denial" of Rita, which would have made the discussion palatable.)

As yet another point, the question still remains open why Galdós would have his Benina deny being Guillermina. And it is difficult to provide an answer for it. Looking briefly at this potential symbolic double, it might be said at least initially that local opinions expressed or represented in this scene on the subject are in some way apt. Benina indeed reflects some of the qualities of the mob's sainted Guillermina: she donates money and goods as if freely, she disguises herself or creates the persona of "saint" for her audience, and, in those acts, she possesses a certain modesty about her abilities. The difference might be drawn for the reader in the motivation for Guillermina. An aristocrat dressing up as a saint in rags, is an act not fully or satisfactorily explained on the level of the narrative (the common folks call it simple modesty, but they have been wrong before). Is she doing this so as her sympathies with Christians would not to be discovered, such as the case with the St. Casilda? Or is the action more sanctimonious? Or is it to be understood in the mode of a kind of romanticized sentimentality?

What might provide some answers are the facts that Guillermina is also appears in Galdós's acclaimed novel Fortunata y Jacinta (1886-87) and that she may also be the reflection of a real life individual from Galdós's Spain. As far as her representation in the earlier work is concerned, she appears there as a charitable type figure who, on the one hand, extracts or elicits donations in order to establish a poorhouse or orphan asylum and, on the other, is limited by the bourgeois pocket that makes her charity possible. It is, thus, in her dealings with the fierce and animalistic street girl Fortunata that she takes her cues

from her bourgeois patron, Jacinta, and acts as the arguably callous accomplice in the confiscation or recuperation of the illegitimate child of Fortunata and Jacinta's husband. Perhaps reflecting this conflict of interests, this Guillermina is nicknamed or labeled in that narrative as "santa burguesa," meaning "bourgeois saint," and "rata ecclesiastica," meaning "ecclesiastic rat." As to her real life persona, unlike the existence of Almudena, scholarship does not seem to debate this figure as drawn from an authentic model. That is, Guillermina has been critically accepted as being the portrait of the historical Doña Ernestina Manuel de Villena, founder of a Madrid orphanage Asilo de Niños huérfanos del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 242, fn. 403). Despite the foundations here,[185] the issue would need to be reconsidered in light of Benina's seeming denial of a Rita-like sainthood, as I portray it. If, indeed, Guillermina was a recognizable figure for a Madrid Catholic readership, and if she would have been problematic for the times (for author or readership or both)--seen rather as a stale institutional figure stuck in a script--, then the third miracle scene could be read not only as suggestively ironic, but also backed with a contemporaneous bite.

Returning to the content of the narrative scene and to the contrasts presented there, Benina's dressing and redressing would in her own schemes have a visible purpose: it enables her begging and thus becomes necessary in producing charity or cash. While the populist in this scene see the similarities between her acts and the saints they were raised on, the fact still remains that they seem to most arbitrarily assign "goodness" to what appears good--a superficiality of judgment which might very well have been

[185] For this discussion, see J. L. Brooks, "The Character of Doña Guillermina Pacheco in Galdós' Novel Fortunata y Jacinta," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies 38 (1961): 86-94; Paolini, "The Benefactor in the Novels of Galdós"; Lucille V. Braun, "Re-Creation of Ernestina Manuel de Villena as Guillermina Pacheco," Hispanic Review 38.1 (Jan. 1970): 32-55; and Lida, "Galdós y sus santas modernas," Anales Galdosianos 10 (1975): 19-30, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Taller Digital de la Universidad de Alicante, 13 July 2006 <http://www.cervantesvirtual/hermeroteca/>.

disconcerting for a Catholic reader, as this lowly group would seem incapable of making a true spiritual value judgment. Certainly, Galdós for his part would have intended full well Benina's near transgression here, her favoring the spirit of God's law over the letter of that of secular society. Moreover, he encourages the grey space between motivations, bringing certain confusion or irony or challenge to all his culturally Catholic readers (fictional or real) in the actions of his heroine, who would profess "I'm not a saint, I'm a sinner," all the while handing over her last coin. In this light, then, this tragi-comedy of a sham saint may well have appeared in contemporaneous reader's perspective more in terms of the original Benina-Rita analogy. As the third miracle may not have or may never happen, thus standing in the ways of the character's potential canonization as a contemporary St. Rita.

To understand more fully how the Benina-Rita analogy may be qualified as a dialogue on a non-canonization, one must recall that the novelist had begun subtly, with his Benina first presented as a reverent St. Rita in a single moment outside of St. Sebastian, yet almost immediately calling her resemblance to that saint into doubt--after all, her garbanzo-like wart on her forehead if drawn ironically from the first, as a question mark. The irony of the scene would not have been lost on churchgoers: looking like St. Rita can obscure one's real identity or avatars among the choirs of saints. But as a churchgoing reader would progress through the extended narrative dialogue and the specific detail of each miracle sequence, likely coming to recognize Benina as gradually transforming from that initial saintly suggestion. In this way, she functions in the narrative less as a rewrite of the figure (as I have argued to be the case for Almudena as Our Lady of the Almudena) than as a meaningful and purposeful denial of that saint's identity, and of some uses of the cult of sainthood, used as social significance. In this

light approach to denial, however, Galdós stays a safe distance from sacrilege (as I will explain further in my next section).

The narrative's gradual denial of this saint unfolds in three miracle-like or non-traditional miracle sequences, where Benina will be shown in each as initially conforming to more traditional qualifications of the Rita legend as an intercessor and converting them into more practical modes of survival in her own world, often in ways that work against some traditional Catholic virtues that may not always be such. In the first miracle sequence, she reclaims self-will as expressed in the ideology of help thyself. More characteristically than many saints, Rita had been known as surrendering her self will to God. In the second sequence, communal salvation is de-mystified in favor of an active apostolate "helping others to help themselves," where Rita was part of a contemplative order, living behind convent walls. In the third, the narrative targets the more precise failure of the traditional rapport between a needy people and their particular saints, which can even lead to their failure to help themselves. While the initial light shed on the Benina-Rita portrait seems dimmer in these sequences, Benina in this last sequence will more directly deny her identification as a figure boxed in by outmoded social expectations as saintly. She will consciously separate herself from the Rita identification aided by the text's asides that the designation had only been a joke,[186] and thus she will likewise put down any ties to her and the local legend of charitable dame Guillermina. Yet she will appear at the end of the sequence in literal disguise as a blind

[186] Throughout the narrative, the novelist in fact qualifies the comparison of Benina to Rita as fueled by the sentiments of jokesters, that is, "guasones de su pueblo [que] se burlaban de ella diciendo que venía de Santa Rita" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 243) ["town jokesters who would make fun of her repeating that she was related to Saint Rita"]. Even later, Benina's house-bound employer, who is insensitive to other gossip, refers to the colloquial witticism at a moment of concern (be it selfish or honest) for her maid's whereabouts: "Benigna de Casia . . . de Casia, sí señor, de donde viene la broma de que es parienta de Santa Rita" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 269).

mendicant woman--wearing the same sort of veiling that Rita would have had, but yet now as a cultural persona with a very different set of claims.

"No soy santa" in Cultural-Historical Perspective

In the way that Benina at first had seemed more identifiable with St. Rita but then later as more technically separated from that model Galdós would seem to be crafting his story-arc to include a larger theological discussion about the qualifications and limits of Rita (or any saint) as a model for his protagonist and, perhaps, of sainthood more generally, understood as a social function. Designed overall, I believe, to unfold as a more critical discourse on popular religion, Benina will emerge as connected to Rita in a kind of narrative process unfolding from her apparent starting place of "saint" and transitioning to "not saint."[187] Most fundamentally, the initial reference to Benina as a saint or a St. Rita in the narrative will ultimately have invoked an empty sense of entitlement that she denies in her "no soy santa," meaning "I am not a saint," which implicates a correction and self-evaluation.[188] I will now further suggest that this "no soy santa" points to a more literal denial of Benina's sainthood as defined in terms familiar from saints' stories like Rita's. That is, I believe Galdós intended the denial overall here to be not so much "I am not a saint" as it is "I am not this kind of model for a saint," that is, not a Guillermina but, more importantly, not a Rita, either. I do not mean to imply here that Rita herself is being critiqued, but rather that the author is reopening and re-evaluating the most traditional logic of saints. To arrive at this larger argument, however,

[187] It should be noted that, unlike Kirsner's argument on dialectics, I do mean this pair necessarily to be seen as dialectical (or in flux)--but rather as progression of movement from one to the other, that is, from "saint" to "not saint."

[188] The former has typically been taken at face value by critics, and the latter as Christian modesty or humility. Kirby, e.g., reasons that Benina will deny her sanctity in this way: "because she is extremely humble and she is unaware of what she represents" (101). Here he echoes an older tradition that reads Benina as a genuine Christ without an agenda.

one must pay closer attention to the St. Rita figure, particularly the kinds of cultural discourses and theological debates that she would have served for the Catholic nations of the era and that were in the public mind.[189]

A favored protector and intercessor in the minds and in hearts of many good Catholics since she had walked the earth in the fifteenth century, Rita would figure as very large against the particular religious backdrop of the later nineteenth century.[190] Bridging the two centuries would be the church's Apostolic proceedings for the saint's canonization, in which primitive devotions to her would first be approved in 1457 and again altered, formalized, by Rita's beatification in 1626--her first advances toward sainthood were thus made well before modern times. Thereafter, the beatified or Blessed Rita (called thus in anticipation of sainthood) would be stalled in church proceedings, but she was again advancing in her centuries-long path to sainthood to the final phases of miracle review by 1897, the year of Misericordia's publication. (The possible sainthood of a Rita looking for a third miracle was thus very topical as Galdós took up the figure.) In this phase of ecclesiastic review, it would have been typical for theological debates to have been known popularly in Catholic nations such as Spain, given that ecclesiasts would have been looking to corroborate evidence and testimony of occurrences of the supernatural connected with Rita, when she purportedly had touched the lives of ordinary believers, historically and contemporaneously. With all eyes on Rita as the church's candidate for sainthood in 1897, before her 1900 canonization,[191] Rita's appearance in novel like Misericordia would have necessarily been read with nuance.

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[189] Again, my most developed argument on this ground will extend into the next chapter. Here I will be drawing intermittent or expectant conclusions.

[190] Here I again draw on Rita's spiritual histories, but particularly on the more recent accounts of García López and Plaza Karki, with more perspective on the proceedings.

[191] Note that Rita would be canonized under Pope Leo XIII in an unprecedented double ceremony in St. Peter's Church. The venue itself would be illuminated for the first time by electric light (11,000,000 feet of wire for 12,000 lamps and 400 chandeliers). The centuries' project of the church (or, rather, of the

Considering Benina as reflecting a contemporaneous religious figure in transition opens up wider possibilities of understanding the character. In this way, the question of Benina as an evolving narrative figure in the narrative becomes an ever more reasonable assumption. Earlier, for example, I discussed their styles of miracle working as a means of showing the two characters' opposition--Rita operating with a will-less and inward or contemplative or non hands-on type healing and Benina in an outward or active manner or, literally, in the street and in lay milieus. But as Rita develops as a spiritual figure (with her Vita, as church written propaganda furthering her cause; see below), Benina progresses toward questioning her role as Rita.

Rita's trajectory may be charted as movement through a series of life renouncements. Recall that, as a laywoman, Rita is made to deny or repress her vocation to enter the formal church. She will set instead serve her parents, assuming the role of merciful caretaker, and her extended family, her husband and sons, acting with the relative virtue of confessor. Later, when living no longer burdened or attached, Rita will again express her desire to enter the religious orders and will do so this time as a cloistered nun. Here she will enact the discipline of asceticism, denying herself all earthly pleasures through fasting and bodily mortification. In this way, she will create the possibility or the space of a kind of physical martyrdom to be fulfilled at last by her bearing of the stigmata. Finally, in her convalescence, she will refuse any basic comfort or distraction of thought existing outside of Christ's martyrdom, existing until death as further confined within her private cell in the cloisters.

Benina's trajectory may be charted otherwise as a reversed course leading from self-abnegations and ultimately converted into self-liberties within the public. Beginning

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Augustinians, to whose order she pertained) would thus burgeon in these final years of the nineteenth century into an altogether new and very modern symbol of the impossible of the next century.

in the space of her employer Doña Paca, that of a bourgeois household in decline (and in need of funding), Benina will give of self by relinquishing her identity as part of the proletariat or working poor to enter the more traditional ranks of the beggar class within a local Madrid diocese. This move, while producing public scandal, will also have the effect of moving her out of the bourgeois economy into a more fluid public space where she will be at liberty to actively seek certain kinds of solutions to her problems, and hopefully to save herself and others (rather than perish, as her employer, in the inaction that would come of living by institutional prescriptions on class and order). Within the municipal or urban center that Benina now occupies as a beggar, the space of the church parish does not prove sufficient to provide for others (now from all classes). In consequence, Benina again turns away from traditional solutions, making, in one interpretation, further sacrifices by pooling meager resources and know-how and by undertaking a kind of mission of mercy or miracle-making in the neglected outer lying suburbs (where good priests and saints occupy the content of legend and not reality). In taking control of her money rather than begging, and in moving to the suburbs, she moves out of that world in search of other solutions. If she denies her own solutions and instead takes further liberties in the city, making public demonstrations of her poverty by begging on a restricted street, she will end up incarcerated in a beggar's prison--concluding the narrative episode and suspending thus her narrative movement. No wonder, then, that the narrative will in fact conclude with Benina's return to the suburbs, which may be read as a more individualizing or self-liberating journey into new spiritual community (see my next chapter).

Where St. Rita moves away from the world and toward a life of contemplation, then, this Benina must move away from the world as Spain knows it and into a less overdetermined space to find her ability to work in active charity. In this way, Galdós

reconstructs the theology defining sainthood as a process qualifying sainthood in a more populist voice.[192] As the church defines this process, a saint in the earliest stages of her emergence may typically be defined in popular legends that form around individuals who, after death, are taken to be patrons or intercessors, miracle-working souls (but not divinity themselves or directly possessing that power). That is, these individuals are collectively believed to possess the skill of offering up prayers to God on behalf of the faithful. Often serving as an indicator of an efficacious patron and intercessor is the intense devotion that she inspires, as sign of the public's belief that their devotion would be rewarded with the ever more certain privilege of God's ear. Once God would hear their prayers, it would be thus in His hands to answer in the form of a miracle. The ultimate test of sanctity in this milieu thus is provided when a saint becomes the medium for the fulfillment of believers' needs.

Despite the rather freeform beginnings of future saints in figures that the public feels are saintly, for that figure to receive the formal title of "saint" would be a matter of selective adoption by the church. A different standard has to be met and different trials altogether imposed: a standard expectation in identifying a saint for the church would be to prove the populist choice as an individual of quantifiable spiritual virtue. Making that case first falls to the efforts of the religious orders or select groups to whom such a miracle-working patron might pertain or for whom that figure might otherwise hold value. These groups would be thus at pains to make the individual's biography (filtering

[192] For this tradition and process, I rely on two fundamental studies, that is, Woodward's Making Saints (see, in particular, 52-64, 53-58, 70-73) and Lawrence S. Cunningham's A Brief History of Saints, Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005). Woodward specifically traces changing ideas on sanctity, making a distinction that nevertheless should be noted as corresponding to what I describe above. That is, the first four centuries defined "saint" as a martyr in the sense in spilling blood in public but it was only in the Middle Ages (when relations with the Roman State became more peaceful) that began to redefine saints as ascetic-martyrs in the sense of undergoing extreme feats of self-denial. These more formal understandings of "saint" continued to stand through the nineteenth century and still stand in large part today (52-64).

legend from corroborated fact in some cases) fit a workable pattern of sanctity, one that typically will show a progression or a mystical journey into what is called a life of "spiritual athletics" or characterized by acts of self-sacrifice and asceticism. These acts gain value for their quality as exemplary, rather than for miracles. The saint's life written to gain proof of sanctity constitutes what is formally called the individual's Vita, often published as a means of propaganda for extending the following of the saint in candidacy.

Once the individual's spiritual story would be made known as part of a petition for further church recognition and in terms that would, moreover, likely find favor, the case of the saint changes hands, coming before ecclesiastical councils in Rome. These councils, among other things, would put this story to the test, substantiating it by turning to a kind of scientific method, so far as it is possible. Typically the individual's body would be as exhumed and examined for evidence of miraculous properties, such as resistance to decomposition,[193] and the possible miracles would be interrogated and traced by communities claiming evidence of them, and, if necessary, all the interested parties would wait for new signs--thus accounting in part for the oftentimes sizeable delays in legitimizing populist choices by taking them up into the canon of saints. At the end of such delays--if the processes do indeed ever reach a seeable end, which is not always the case--the church rewards the patient devout by inscribing the new saint into a catalogue or canon of saints, thus canonization, either condoning or requiring that honors be shown to this figure in the context of the mass or liturgy (typically on a particular day of the church calendar, a feast day; see my next chapter). In doing so, what starts as a

[193] Perhaps for this reason the church would not easily relinquish the corporeal presence of Rita. She was not entombed but, rather, put to rest in a glass coffin (since 1947 in her Basilica in Cascia, Italy). In such circumstance, she has to date largely resisted physical degeneration and has been a persistently curative intercessor.

figure of the popular religious imaginary is transformed (albeit in a form altered and molded to gain legitimization) into an acceptable model for the Catholic community.[194]

Looking at Rita and Benina in this light, they will emerge as correlate and timely religious critiques: both draw attention to and question how everyday lives are written into Vitae acceptable to the church. The author's choice of St. Rita in this critique is inspired. Rita's moves from the secular to the religious-institutional to the microcosmic space of contemplation, dedicated to a single religious dogma, were well know and have become particularly charged in the narrative. That is, they move the reader's attention back to the origins of sainthood, where their historical experience shows them the end state of a once-people's saint now poised at the very moment of institutionalization--and cooptation--by the church. And, in this way, the Spanish church's contemporaneous Rita becomes available as a cultural resource for the author as a model of saint, showing how these figures are layered with the expectations and precepts traditionally surrounding saints. Moreover, his Rita is a saint still very much heading in the direction in which the church would have her pointed. In this way, the refrain "no soy santa" would, I argue, very strategically refer not just to the person, but also to this cultural circumstance, subtly reminding a readership of the workings of the system or that their St. Rita would still have been at that time very literally a work in progress. In the novel, however, that work and the mechanisms behind it are deprecated, shown to be capricious in representing the truth of the social world.

As the vehicle for Galdós's critique of sainthood, Benina's moves from the secular-institutional to more primitive or secular (in sense of the development of saints) socio-religious spaces, notwithstanding her temporary confinement, constitute a denial of, or at least an inversion of the Rita story. That is, Benina is moving backwards both

[194] Even after her canonization, Rita however will still ring of the popular rhetoric of the impossible.

historically and theologically from Rita--her life is removed a degree at a time from the social myths of interdependences, from verifiable miracles, from religious spaces set apart from the needy, from taking signs and symbols literally (an absent priest as a sign that all is lost, a child looking sick to death as dying, etc.), and from relinquishing her will for physical survival as a properly meek recipient of church charity would have to do. Where she lands in this cultural time warp clearly juxtaposes the letter and the spirit of official definitions of what saints ought to be, opposing church-sponsored prescriptive readings and officialized definitions of social saints. As such, Galdós's new possible saint has a story arc that consciously is cast to run counter to the values evoked in the process of making saints. In fact, she may well be modeling an alternate logic of sanctification within the social-secular world, away from the dead letters of theological virtues. If resisting that model (a model which prevents Benina's mob from accepting her and seeing her true virtue in self-help rather than Christian charity), the character suggests a need to resist how human lives and devotions are warped by such church processes when they are taken and transformed into emblems or models or ideals. Galdós advocates the good in action rather than in prescribed forms, as he shows how a real saint saves lives, before she is packaged by the community en masse as intermittent saviors or intercessors to salvation and before the life scripts inherent in that packaging help to destroy new class self-consciousness and capacity for self-preservation.

Galdós's Benina thus not only challenges models of sainthood in theological contexts but also makes a larger socio-religious critique. At the historical moment when St. Rita was being turned into a supernatural being, Galdós would be attempting to turn her back, through his Benina, into an analogue for a real social type, a real patron saint for the impossible task of reversing an entire class's problems with capital, ownership, and self-determination. In a real sense, he is providing his own version of the church's

officializing Vita, if it were meant to show the virtues of individuals--to show a St. Rita who would not represent abstract virtues, but rather a Sister Rita or Rita as the good daughter and wife. This Rita would have the ability to be the kind of saint that Benina needs to be seen as by her readers: unholy (because she transgresses against laws and church custom), but somehow more sincere or authentically human. In this way, the author would remind his readers that religious models do in fact have real social and historical referents. And in attempting to restore these models to their origins from and implications for society, they will tend to reveal themselves as all too often prescriptive rather than descriptive of what the real religious mysteries of society ought to be--a dedication to community, work, and the dignity of work rather than to abstracts. By encouraging this kind of cultural awareness, the author, I contend, would impress on his readership their own responsibility as saint makers and so suggesting that they retrace or rethink the often-debilitating traditional cultural-religious scripts that encase existing models for sanctity.

What the mob in the narrative will not hear, then, Galdós has exhumed--he shows his contemporaneous readership a real body for their own benefit. Galdós is performing an autopsy on the actions of his era's church, as it tried to appeal to the masses by emblematizing a model of social renunciation or of abstract piety--a model aimed at placating the poor for their abstract sanctity, rather than one of social consciousness or of action. His report reveals such saint-making as more of a self-interested institutional gesture than attention to souls. It is revealing that, after Rita's canonization, this church would in fact make wide use of the figure of Rita to create new, alternate Latin American sites of possible religious fervor.[195] This saint, as Galdós well knew, was being canonized

[195] It is interesting to consider how Rita's lore in this period was being used in the Catholic provinces, that is, in Spain and in the Spanish colonies. At a moment when Augustinian missionaries were being suppressed by various nations, Pope Leo XIII would refortify the church in Spain (e.g., el Escorial would

out of church self-interest, as a means of maintaining their own sphere of influence in a more general tide of eroding political and social support. In this way, a church has found a saint promising to alleviate needy or impossible causes (God will help the helpless), yet one which ultimately can be seen as cementing misdirections within its own hierarchy--a hierarchy which was now too financially diminished to really take care of its own. Such debates about the social responsibility of the church have been common in the modern era, but not necessarily in more conservative nations of extreme consolidation and centralization, such as Galdós's Spain.

Once exposing these debates, it would also remain to Galdós ultimately to sketch the features of a perhaps unthinkable, but more imitable, model--a saint of the social impossible. Through this saint, his readership may see all the nuances and half-truths of doctrine and their social conditions that their church would not otherwise have disclosed. For example, that a lack of mendacity and charity are cardinal virtues but that virtue of this kind may rather be a luxury, that white lies and petty thefts may be sins, but that they may also provide another day's bread in cases where you have no other hopes. Thus he shows that the church's devil may try to curse you if you reclaim blessings of life for yourself, that God's law is not fixed, and that property is not just temptation but rather the way to life in this world of bourgeois respectability and their means of control over the working poor. And how would the author have dared, one may ask, to have his own saint utter such apparent blasphemy without risking offense to the very readers to whom he

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be founded in 1895). The Augustinians of Galdós's day and national milieu thus were looking very institutionalized, and this reputation was reflected in the colonies. There is, for example, evidence in devotional literature of that precise period that Rita had been taken on the road, as it were, for missionary work. Many of these works published in the colonies (N.B., by presses using titles such as "niños abandonados," meaning "abandoned children") seemed to couch their evangelizing in simple precepts borrowed from the St. Rita story. A potential convert of the church might expect to learn how to live like St. Rita, in the sense of finding salvation or finding a good advocate or lawyer to plea his or her case to God. Towards the end of the period, then, when the Augustinians were furthering their cause in support Rita's canonization, this patron saint of the impossible was clearly turning from a popular favorite into an overly marked tool of the institution.

wished to appeal? By taking up a familiar anthem, "no soy santa," he began to use the legalistic church quibble of 1897 as an internal signpost in the novel, setting Rita into her contemporaneous moment as a moment of free speech. Galdós has reminded his readers of a reading strategy that they, too, may use to find and declare their own patron saints that the church may have been overlooking.

Social Saints, Social Critiques: Some Conclusions

To understand the Benina-Rita analogy in Misericordia as I have done, one must move beyond the approaches of more standard and secular criticism labeling Benina as St. Rita as if that were a fixed analogy. This critical tendency may come from modernity's characteristic Western-centered intolerance for more conservative national religious traditions, among those the mystery of the saints (see my project introduction). As a result, these approaches have made the implicit error of accommodating to the text more modern or static definitions of "saint" and canonization as products of the past rather than viewing them more authentically as alive and functioning within the Catholic tradition, as part of Galdós's contemporaneous society. Such critics will have overlooked that these processes might also be the starting point for an author presenting a non-traditional or more modernizing vision of society to an audience by recognizing the cultural logics and stories that they heard around them. There is little question that Benina is marked in terms familiar as those of a particular saint, Rita. For a critic, to call her simply a Rita, as if that analogy were static and pre-determined, is in fact to address only half the social dialogue that the author is engaging.

From the first moment of introducing his Benina, as I have argued, Galdós builds a greater strategic reading potential into the narrative, and so identifying the author's message requires a suspension of modern norms of judgment, if today's readers are to

discover and appreciate how he deploys religious argumentation to secular ends. As much as the initial portrait in the novel might tempt a reader or critic to take the character as a Rita because of her bearing amidst almsgivers, by the coincidence of her name, and by her selflessness, the extended reading strategy that I attribute to Galdós and the literacy he attributes to his readership seems to move beyond or deny any too-simple assumptions about her static nature. In the miracle sequences, as I have shown, the reader may observe Benina in process or in her transformation, away from the church formalisms of the original figure and toward following her own resourceful transgressions against the word of faith and law, yet within its spirit--her well-developed rationale about the personal discernment of need, and her self-sacrificing risk-taking as a debtor-thief. Finally, though, it is her third miracle that undoes her as the populist that she should have become. Instead, she succumbs to the force of church-sanctified misrepresentation--thereby exposing more the stagnated preconceptions of the church and the bourgeoisie that it has been serving, rather than claiming the bearing or paradigm for a real social worker who could be effective for the working poor of this Spain. She follows the church and fails to become a saint according to the spirit of the paradigm.

In this chapter, again, a consideration of cultural context has helped to open up a facet of the author's artistry that critics have overlooked, but that would likely have been in plain sight to many contemporary Catholic readers. That is, as I have argued, the fact of St. Rita's impending but not accomplished canonization by 1897, the year of Misericordia's publication (signaled in the text by "no soy santa"), becomes a critical piece of historical evidence. Through this historical lens, we have reclaimed more than an anachronistic "St. Rita." Reconsidering, as I have, Rita and Benina from this viewpoint, both figures are linked dynamically through their cultural and narrative references as pointing toward a true impossible: a new future for the lower classes within Spain.

Benina, however, shows us how her own investigation for her possible canonization in the novel has gradually turned into her non-canonization: the populist perceptions of her saintliness (established with reference to the church) are disconfirmed in the novel by Galdós's critique of norms of sainthood enforced by the middle classes and their dogmatic church--in following her own sense of sanctity, she is declared a sinner by the institutional church, not a saint, and so is sent to jail rather than to her religious cell (as the church's St. Rita should have been, in a world more truly interested in holiness). Her "no soy santa" becomes an ironic critique of how the church uses cultural-religious attempts to suit its own agenda and how others have failed to reconstruct such models to further their own agendas, in terms applicable to the day.

While implicit cultural cues in the text have provided what I feel is a more revealing approach to the text, the text itself provides ample evidence that would help remind its larger cultural community about a necessary commentary or critique of its own era--providing a lesson, if you will, for its Catholic readership on the difference between the letter and the spirit of the law. As the process of canonization of a saint is inverted by the novelist to show how populist sentiments can turn into a non-declaration of sainthood, we see how more practical or imperfect saints emerge for the Spain of the day, when saints functioning as social workers would retain an innate ethical-moral sense about the limitations of class interests at its core. The narrative would then seem to be taking St. Rita herself back to possible origins so that his readers can see what the real impossible causes of the day really are: changes in the bourgeoisie, repairing what they have done to Spain (forcing a working woman to pay their bills) and revealing how they use church norms to propagate their own social agenda (imprisoning the real saint in the texts).

Misericordia's hypothetical reverse of a most prominent saint on the church's agenda in the age, as I have suggested, may be read more precisely as a failure of the

Catholic mystery of saints--as evidenced in practice by the contemporaneous Catholic construct of a show saint such as Rita, when the church aimed at making the poor feel acknowledged, without actually doing anything for their real circumstances. Yet Galdós has not moved to express overt heresy: his character's "no soy santa" here acts as the escape valve of denial for ever having implied such deviancy, even as it underscores for the reader what might really be occurring. In the absence of the kind of true, spiritual giving and receiving framed by sub-saintly rhetoric, these acts have taken on a rougher exterior in Galdós's portrayal, as the functional tactics of basic survival are condemned as illegal and immoral rather than as necessary, with the evil inherent in society, not the sinners. But Galdós's novel will, as we shall see in the next chapter, go beyond faceless microlending in recommending a model for a new Spain. As it continues to layer in references in the discourses of Spain's Catholic imaginary of the day, the principles of community and self-help that Galdós is recommending will eventually become better defined, as I will argue in my next chapter. Galdós will amplify his point by reference to the name and face of another kind of saint--in this case, one with a clearer socio-historical precedent.

Chapter Four:

St. Romuald, The Reformist Disguise of Benina and the "Good Child"

Re-reading Misericordia as a religiously symbolic narrative conveying a social commentary to a contemporaneous readership, I have thus far been redefining what have become standard assumptions regarding Misericordia's Almudena and Benina as symbolic vehicles, introducing the respective iconographical and theological strategies of narration associated with these figures as methods for uncovering new meaning, and revealing the discrete cultural critiques that emerge when an author uses these resources. In the previous chapter, a case in point for the novel's theological strategy, I read Benina as a figure that scholarship has labeled as Catholic, yet having done so without applying a precise cultural-religious critique. As I demonstrated, these accounts have undervalued the character's evolution in the narrative more precisely away from depicting the St. Rita figure straightforwardly. I further revealed how the fading figuration of Rita in the novel points to an internal Apostolic-type debate, a strategic textual dialogue working in direct confrontation with church inquiries impacting the saint's canonization in the final years of the nineteenth century. In this contemporaneous light, the character should be taken, I argued, as a criticism of the traditional figure and of saints more generally, as instruments of institutional Catholicism.

As a cultural symbol yet unresolved, Benina will again become the focus of this chapter--now, however, as she transitions from acting as a figuration of St. Rita to a figuration of St. Romuald. Methodologically, I will address this transition in terms of my third and final explicated strategy of narration associated with traditional Catholic cultural rhetoric, that is, "analogical" or "figural" interpretation. Here, St. Rita, addressed

historically as an Italian Augustinian monastic (nun), will provide a cultural ambient, a symbolic analogue or passageway so to speak, to Romuald as an Italian Benedictine monastic (monk) of an earlier period. Once associated in this way, the difference in the set of saintly attributes of these Catholic figures, distinct in their apostolate or service / mission in the church, will serve to fit Benina more neatly into a more abstract or ethical argument addressed in the cultural model of Romuald and, thus, to reveal another level of cultural engagement in the novel.

As an integral facet of this argument, Misericordia's Don Romualdo, in his name suggesting the simplest identification with a saint, Romuald, will also become significant in making this transition by acting as another saintly doppelgänger for Benina. In this reading, again aimed at changing how his audience would understand saints as referring to their everyday lives, Don Romualdo will seem less the true analogue to his namesake St. Romuald than Benina herself will. In other words, Galdós will have again used and reversed a thread of traditional Catholic imagery to make a new case about the spirit rather than the letter of Christianity. I will be here be pursing the disjunction between Romualdo-St. Romuald, as a juxtaposition in which I will distinguish throughout by using "Romualdo" as referring to Galdós's character and "Romuald" to the historical saint. However, this juxtaposition will still ultimately lead us into an exploration of the association of Benina-St. Romuald.

To make this argument, I will begin with an assessment of scholarship on Don Romualdo, a figure that, despite being acknowledged as the historical referent for St. Romuald, has come into the criticism as having almost purely aesthetic relevance. Reclaiming the discussion of Don Romualdo as a cultural-religious signpost for a Catholic readership, I will continue by assessing this figure within a more precise cultural iconography, revealing its problematic symbolism for a traditional Spanish Catholic

public and thus calling into question what critics have otherwise assumed to be the overall positive function of the character in the narrative.

Bringing Don Romualdo into this new light, I will then show how the novelist builds Benina's trajectory, in essence and not in name, to recall the historical saint's life path (pointing here to the way in which the analogical or figural recapitulation of a matrix of sainthood will become more socially relevant). Finally, I will not only argue that this analogy furnishes its own discrete cultural critique, as I have done in previous chapters, but also that these critiques open the readership to an overall allegorical reading of the novel.

If Benina-St. Romuald functions this way, then the novel's religious allegory provides an overall structure to the novel that standard criticism will have consistently overlooked. In this new reading, all major characters and their cultural symbols will be drawn together as an indication of the author's larger critical program to reveal it as subtly but decisively reformist.

The Critics' Multiple Romualdos, or a Paucity of Vision on the Poorhouse Priest

Not just another representation of "the good priest," a type that has traditionally characterized Galdós's later work for many critics,[196] Don Romualdo, the Catholic priest in Misericordia, is singular in depiction. The novel's early narrative development introduces Romualdo as little more than the white lie that Benina tells in order to conceal her street dealings and begging. While starting as an imaginative deception, the character will nevertheless emerge at a later moment in the novel as very much foregrounded and as "flesh and blood."

[196] E.g., Ruiz Ramón, Tres personajes Galdosianos.

Offering no simple solution to the question and status of the character's narrative existence, the novelist will at first provide the reader with little other perspective on the mystery than that of Romualdo's would-be creator, Benina. But relying on the protagonist's perspective, a reader will be left to rationalize the priest's functional existence guided only by Benina's own confused musings on the subject--ranging from her wanting to believe "the miracle" that she may have in fact willed his materialization to the coincidence that she would happen to encounter a priest of the same name and with some of the same attributes as she has dreamed up. In this way, Romualdo has remained one of the narrative's most blatant puzzles, a kind of extended mystery--perhaps the only point on which critics on the subject might agree.

As this seemingly fantastic interjection into an otherwise verisimilar or realistic-looking narrative, Romualdo not surprisingly has been downplayed by critics preferring more socio-realist or historical approaches to the text,[197] but, at the same time, he has long been one of the most hotly debated of Galdós characters in aesthetic criticism. In attempting to lay its finger on how the priest functions as a narrative device, this latter criticism has tended to focus on the text-intrinsic possibilities of the figure, that is, how the figure functions to advance the narrative structure. Such structural analyses will go beyond only when entertaining the character as a commentary on the nature of fiction and reality or as a kind of Quixotic device in which Benina, along with the reader, will be forced to confront the notion of spiritual triumph being replaced by harsher realities.

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[197] As early as 1958, Leon Livingstone comments on this issue in his "Interior Duplication and the Problem of Form in the Modern Spanish Novel," PMLA 73.4 (1958): 393-406. He notes the difficulties of treating Romualdo as an element within a Realist approach: "In order to judge Misericordia with a purely realistic criterion, it thus becomes necessary either to ignore the Don Romualdo episode entirely--as many critics of Galdós have--or to ascribe it to merely humorous fantasy on the part of the author, a momentary lapse for which he may be forgiven in view of the overwhelming proportion of realism in the novel" (399). And as late as 1983, Kirby notes this continued marginalization of the character: "Most critics tend to judge Misericordia with purely realistic criteria and, since Romualdo's presence does not fit comfortably within their view of the novel's realistic structure, they choose either to overlook him or to relegate him to a position of minor importance" (102-03).

In broadest trends, critical accounts roughly in the last half-century have read Romualdo as (1) a triumph of Christian values or spirituality or as "the miracle" (assuming the narrative existence of a continued form of the invented Romualdo made flesh), (2) a metaphysical commentary (with certain theological value, but whose reality is indifferent), or (3) an institutional figure (assuming a discontinuity between Benina's invention and the "real" priest, resulting in two or more separate Romualdo's). Considering Romualdo as more than these kinds of internal aesthetic forms, I will end by gesturing towards threads in this criticism that may help bring the character into relief as an integral part of a novel making a socio-realist commentary and critique.

Like the tradition that has read Benina as transcendent, ultimately good or Christian, and ahistorical (see my chapter "Benina's Denial of the 'Saint' in St. Rita"), one of the most foundational readings of Don Romualdo takes the character to be the physical manifestation of Christian transcendence, a spiritual principle incarnate. This reading was given impetus by efforts to re-valorize Galdós as a kind of Romantic creative genius, which has been an issue for aesthetic criticism since the mid-twentieth century (for this history, see my critical introduction). In seminal work of critics of this period, most notably Casalduero (orig. pub. 1943),[198] Almudena and Benina become testaments, respectively, of timeless qualities of spiritual universality and faultless charity (discussed in my chapters "Almudena as Catholic Patron for a Syncretic Spain" and "Benina's Denial of the 'Saint' in St. Rita). Not surprisingly, in this context, Romualdo becomes a more abstract ethical-religious figure correlated with the miracle worked by Benina's labor of selfless charity, or by her intercession. Suggested as a religious objective correlative for such values, the priest's role is generally interpreted in reference to one particular scene in the novel in which he brings Benina's employer the news of her

[198] Casalduero, "Significado y Forma de Misericordia," Vida y obra de Galdós.

inheritance. In this passage, he serves as Misericordia's solution to the predicament of poverty, the proof of the triumph of Christian spirituality over physical conditions,[199] or, as Casalduero himself encapsulates it, as the symbol of a higher order of justice.[200]

Taking off from this interpretation of Don Romualdo as religious miracle, critics have argued this aspect to be proof overall of the novel's Christian quality and adherence to Christian ethics. For example, Russell (1967),[201] who has argued Benina as the most genuine Christ in Galdós (see my chapter "The National Spaniard Behind New Criticism's 'Transcendent' Artist"), presents Romualdo as operating within this story of the protagonist's sanctification. In this account, the character is principally seen as a marker for the moment when Benina, unconscious of her ways, is transformed into wonder-worker. Other critics have come to focus on the narrative build up to the miracle. Taking subtle mentions of Romualdo earlier in the narrative to be a kind of prophecy or premonition, these critics read the priest's appearance in the inheritance scene as the finished expression of miracle of charity and, thus, of the priest's role in tying the narrative together.[202] Schyfter (orig. pub. 1973),[203] who reads Almudena as a Jewish

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[199] In his "Galdós and History," MLN 85.2 (1970): 274-79, Paul R. Olson already begins to respond to the reading of Misericordia as presenting a spiritual solution to a social problem. He suggests the charitable protagonist's exclusion from Doña Paca's inheritance rather to be a closing irony. In this way, spiritual and historical reality (grim poverty) for the critic will be left at odds. This more pessimistic view of the ending will become developed by subsequent studies.

[200] Expressed in terms of the oppositional values of money and love, Romualdo serves this "higher order" as he is created by Benina in order to bring justice through selfless and loving charity to a world in which there is no justice or charity other than what little might be acquired through money: "[L]o que verdaderamente inventa Benina no es un personaje; de la misma manera que lo que necesita para hacer la caridad no es el dinero. De lo que se trata, como confiesa la misma Benigna, es de inventar la justicia, esto es, crearla. Lo mismo que lo escencial para hacer la caridad no es el dinero, sino el amor" (Casalduero, "Significado y Forma de Misericordia," Vida y obra de Galdós 233).

[201] Russell, "The Christ Figure in Misericordia," The Christ Figure in the Novels of Pérez Galdós.

[202] E.g., Varey's "Charity in Misericordia," looks at charity as a more general thematic, as well as a Christian value. Bestowing endowed funds or "money which is not earned, whether it be the coppers begged at the church door or the unexpected windfall of the legacy" (172), Benina's Romualdo will act for this critic as a "fairy god-mother" figure (184). But it is Benina's exclusion from this gift that will serve to draw her, unlike other characters, as a saint-like, especially as she triumphs spiritually and overcomes natural depravity (191, 193-4). Schraibman's "El ecumenismo de Galdós" perceives Benina as charity in, again, a general or universal Christian sense. For this critic, Galdós's changing religious ideology

protagonist rivaling Benina as the Christian one (see my critical introduction), notes the seeming parallel between Almudena's dreamlike manifestation of the benevolent demon king Samdai and Benina's creation of Romualdo. Both are symbolic for the critic of man's or woman's fertile mind or ability to create his or her own solutions or salvation.[204]

Extending such analyses of Romualdo even further, Kirby (1983) considers the character as bringing a point of religious crescendo to the novel, revealing two possible religious icons. Kirby, recall, in the discussion of Benina, was one of the few critics to have pointed to Misericordia's parallels in naming the suggested relation of Benina of Casia to St. Rita of Cascia. Not surprisingly, he will suggest Romualdo as a figuration of St. Romuald. The suggestion does not exclude a parallel claim, like Schyfter's, that Almudena's mythical King Samdai anticipates the appearance of Benina's Romualdo. For this critic, though, the priest's family name "Cedrón" recalling the "cedar tree" in the Old Testament that prefigures Christ additionally depicts Romualdo as this very Christian

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throughout his lifetime will bring a diversity to the novelist's work that finds a stylistic basis in oppositions (e.g., viewpoints on the catholic institution, priests), dualities (e.g., Benina as real-ideal, virtue-vice, human-saint, reconciling Semitic diversity, imitable charity as the solution for Spain), dual personalities (e.g., Ponte, Paca; see 884), synthesis (e.g., Almudena), and, notably, duplication (e.g., of Romualdo, realist-idealist, real-symbolic, the invented as transitioning to the real). Sinnigen's "The Search for a New Totality in Nazarín, Halma, Misericordia", as the title implies, attempts to see both the traditional religious novels, that is, Nazarín and Halma and the traditional aesthetic and religious masterpiece Misericordia as a trilogy. This critic also reasons, relying on Georg Lukács's Theory of the Novel (1920), that all works represent the struggle of the individual within society and determine within this representation to transcend the historical moment. For example, Misericordia "culminates in the appearance of a 'real' Don Romualdo who fulfills Benina's lie, Almudena's divination, and Paca's dream" (246) by which Galdós would convey the transcendence of his protagonist--introducing a kind of divine power into her harsh world (249). Nevertheless, when Benina can no longer satisfy the needs of those she serves, Don Romualdo will step up to save her and her flock (250).

[203] See, particularly, "Almudena and the Jewish Theme in Misericordia" 78-100

[204] "The significance of the Romualdo episode has received much critical attention although not from the point of view of a parallel to Almudena's Samadai. But Don Romualdo's very presence is foreshadowed by that of Samdai . . . . That man is able to create the possibility of his own redemption, as the Don Romualdo episode testifies, is the ultimate lesson of Misericordia. Benina creates Don Romualdo out of her desperation. He represents self-assertion in the face of misfortune and the triumph of the vital instinct in man. Galdós clearly had in mind the idea that man's creativity can triumph over the deepest states of deprivation and frustration and, indeed, that precisely out of such depths of despair and hopelessness is man's spirit most capable of fashioning his own salvation" (Schyfter 93).

Messiah.[205] Once again a potential polemical cultural-religious referent seems to have been gelded by a critic's insistence on the novelist's use of a character as a figuration of this more universal Christian figure--Romualdo is Christ, and not a realistic referent.

Paralleling the insistence on Romualdo as a spiritual symbol, the reading of the character as a narrative mechanism for metaphysical commentary will further divorce the character from his cultural-religious context. Critics reading the character thus have cast him as an even more aesthetic figure, often associated in Spain with the critical literature of the "Generation of 1898."[206] Such accounts have as their agenda the revalorization of the novelist as an artist more clearly modern or tied to a new century. One of the critics of this Galdós scholarship, Leon Livingstone (1958),[207] makes this claim by way of reading Benina's Romualdo as an experimental element in the novel, and further using this critique to count Galdós among the greats of Spanish literature. More specifically, Livingstone takes the novelist as applying the traditional Spanish juxtaposition between illusion and reality, familiar in Miguel de Cervantes and Pedro Calderón de la Barca in Spain's literary Golden Age (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and in Miguel de Unamuno and Francisco Ayala among the Generation of 1898 (extending artistically into in the twentieth century). Misericordia's Galdós, for this critic, bridges the stylistic gap between these great ages in Spanish literature, moving beyond Realism to function as an early precursor of what would become a signature piece for authors such as Unamuno

[205] This detail is not one that Benina invents, but, rather, one that itself the embodied Romualdo reveals directly to Benina's employer, Doña Paca. A moment of symbolic introduction of Romualdo as a messiah for Kirby, it will nevertheless become critical in my counter reading of the priest as benign later in this chapter.

[206] See my chapter "The National Spaniard Behind New Criticism's 'Transcendent' Artist" for more on critical efforts to revalorize the novelist and on definitions of literary movements in Spain at a moment when questions of national identity and art's purpose were vital.

[207] Leon Livingstone, "Interior Duplication and the Problem of Form in the Modern Spanish Novel," PMLA 73.4 (1958): 393-406.

who would use this juxtaposition to dialogue more overtly on art and life and on artistic identity and national concerns.

Re-conceived within this aestheticizing tradition, the interaction of Benina and Don Romualdo will for more socially minded critics no longer be interpreted as saint and miracle in the Christian sense, but rather as secular creator and creation--starting with critics such as Kronik (1981)[208] and William Worden (2004-5)[209] who discuss Galdós's creative process and the nature of reality. Picking up the critical thread at almost the very moment that Kirby was giving the aesthetic-religious perspective on Romualdo its maximum expression, Kronik re-inscribes Misericordia into the aesthetic canon by taking Benina as a symbol of the power of the creator-novelist and Romualdo, or his narrative story in the form of her own framed novel or novel-within-a-novel (an example more precisely of what the twentieth century would term metafiction).[210] As this kind of secondary creation, an embedded piece in a larger novel, the miracle scene highlighted by more religiously oriented critics will lose importance in the face of the novel's actual conclusion, which he will question as suggesting any real salvation or spiritual triumph on the part of Benina. That is to say, in a reading that takes Benina as a creator who ends her days as the relative non-beneficiary of her own lucrative creation, the novel's end will now come to signal for these that creative power or spirituality cannot be assumed to

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[208] John W. Kronik, "Misericordia as Metafiction," Homenaje a Antonio Sánchez Barbudo: Ensayos de literatura española moderna, ed. Benito Brancaforte, et al. (Madison: Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese, U of Wisconsin, 1981) 37-50. I already noted this critic's more recent work in my discussion of Benina as having pointed to St. Rita as an aesthetic or symbolic device for the protagonist, although without supplying any further cultural context (see my chapter "Benina's Denial of the 'Saint' in St. Rita").

[209] William Worden, "Los cuatro don Romualdos de Misericordia," Letras Peninsulares 17.2-3 (Fall / Winter 2004-05): 611-20.

[210] Nicoles Malaret's "Misericordia, una reflexión sobre la creación novelesca," Anales Galdosianos 17 (1982): 89-95 also focuses on the creative act in the novel, elaborating the same mechanism of a secondary novel that Benina writes and Doña Paca reads.

remedy man's material condition. The power of such narratives had perhaps been just an artist's (or a critic's) fantasy--this truth as such being reveal through a fiction.

Not valorizing these kinds of aesthetic truths in isolation, Worden considers Benina from the inverse side of the process, taking her as the reader of her own creation, applying reader response theory to take the novel as the shared creation of novelist and reader. The critic takes what he conceives as the splitting of Romualdo into four (the existence of at least three Romualdo's for Benina and one for Doña Paca) as admitting to the semantic multiplicity and indeterminable ambiguity of both fiction and reality. At this point, however, one might ask if scholarship on Don Romualdo has become more open to a plurality of meanings or merely self-defeatist in eschewing conclusions?

Another approach to the puzzle of the priest is more contemporary, focusing on the vision of, not four, but two ideologically distinct Romualdos. In this reading, the priest that Benina invents will remain an ideal figment of her imagination, reflecting her idea of an alternative charity, but not one that the reader should confuse with the real Don Romualdo (now commonly distinguished by the critics as "Cedrón") who exists as the flesh-and-blood character. Critics here begin to move away from the rhetoric of creator-creation, both in terms of spiritual and literary thematics (taking either Benina or Galdós as creators), as they posit an oppositional dialogue in Misericordia between a charitable outsider and the institution as charitable. As this outsider, Benina will now be envisioned as a character who failed to transcend the limits on her reality, and the "real" priest as an institutional figure, often benevolent or more ideologically positive than Benina's fictional one.

Qualifying the priest as a kind of a real and certain good, opposed to the more idealistic (delusional?) Benina, Walter Glannon (1985)[211] and Eamonn Rodgers (1986)[212] represent well the possible variances within this kind of reading. Glannon, for his part, will argue that Benina's inventive charity, defined as an indiscriminate and ineffective form of "commutative" justice, in fact opposes that of Don Romualdo Cedrón--who is considered as created by the protagonist but then embraced by the novelist as the embodiment of a more efficacious "distributive" justice or a kind of socio-economic tough love.[213] In this latter system, individual needs are subordinate to the communal good, and aid is distributed proportionally with performance, rather than unconditionally. Cedrón will be characteristically taken in this reading not only as the mouthpiece of the novelist but moreover of an institution of social justice, symbolized by the more equitable distribution of social justice of the municipal poorhouse that the priest runs, "la Misericordia," Seen within the tradition that made her, Benina emerges as the foil who holds this system in check by acting as a force for charity outside the institutions but also who chooses to subsist freely (and somewhat foolishly) on the fringe of society, rather than to pay the price for accepting its benefits.

For Rodgers, Cedrón is still a blameless figure of the institution, yet the character will nevertheless depict the less noble of choices in these opposing notions of charity. That is, this critic sees many of the poor figures in the novel--not just Benina--as inventors who find novel ways to settle their own lives, but not necessarily to change the system. What they choose to invent, they do so in order to save themselves, as

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[211] Walter Glannon. "Charity and Distributive Justice: Misericordia Reexamined," MLN 100.2 (1985): 247-64.

[212] Eamonn Rodgers, "¿Cristal o diamontes? La verdad de la mentira en Misericordia," Anales Galdosianos 21 (1986): 187-94.

[213] By arguing for the representation of justice as a more definable system, the critic may also be responding to more general ethical readings of Romualdo as symbolizing justice, such as Casalduero's.

representing an ideological choice. For example, Doña Paca conceives of a charitable paradigm that manifests itself in the form of a church official (Cedrón delivers the inheritance). That is, she symbolically chooses economic over spiritual patronage--a choice that will ultimately fail her. But Benina conceives of selfless charity as personified in her imagined Romualdo (the real miracle for Rodgers). She will choose the moral highroad and achieve a modest victory--but a victory nonetheless dampened by economic realities or the material organization of a Spain that will produce an infinity of poor people. While Benina has assuredly regressed in this failure on the path of transcendence traditionally ascribed to her, Romualdo, an ideologically orphaned child, will now gain in stature or reputation. Perceiving this character as a minion of an institution that fails the majority of the poor it would claim to serve, it is curious that neither critic has considered the depiction of Cedrón as anything more socially critical than as "mundane" or "adequate."[214]

As a spiritual triumph or a delusion, as a fiction that reveals a reality or a reality that will not be read simply, and as an extemporaneous or institutional charity, Galdós's Don Romualdo has thus consistently lead criticism to grapple with the figure's ambiguity. But as a figure still begging answers to such questions, Romualdo will ask that we as readers reformulate our query, but not just repeatedly in general or traditional philosophical or theological terms. That is, to understand Romualdo one must consider how the novelist's artistic tools differ from, rather then anticipate, a more modern and

[214] Both Lois Baer Barr's "Social Decay and Disintegration in Misericordia," Anales Galdosianos 17 (1982): 97-104 and Hazel Gold's "Outsider Art: Homelessness in Misericordia," Anales Galdosianos 36 (2001): 141-54 point to the now critically famous statement in which Romualdo will characterize Spain as socio-economically impoverished or, metaphorically, as an infinite poorhouse. Barr's will note the priest's Church-funded poorhouse, "la Misericordia" as insufficient in its remedy of this state of affairs (97). Gold will go further to read the poorhouse as a plainly disparaging social commentary on a failed institutional mechanism of the novelist's Spain. But in neither case, even where Cedrón is signaled as a kind of bleak commentator, will he become as problematic a priest and narrative double as, I believe, Galdós may have intended. I will return to Gold in a subsequent section in this chapter.

secular literary aesthetic in Spain.[215] I will in what follows also point out that the religious narrative must be considered as a functional piece that can communicate (or at least was intended to communicate) within its larger cultural milieu or the Catholic imaginary of the time.

Leaving behind then the question of Don Romualdo as an aesthetic mechanism of the narrative, I will now read the character's purpose as a precisely laid textual clue engaging a contemporaneous readership through a kind of symbolic suspense. Beginning by reconsidering the subtleties of Romualdo more precisely as a Catholic symbol, I will contextualize the priest in a broader socio-cultural dialogue conditioned by well-known religious materials, as a more contestable institutional figure--a dispenser of an adequate, however sterile, charity. I will do so without, however, losing sight of the further possibilities in this dialogue in respect to the figure's shifting narrative referentiality as a cultural signifer, which will expand the vision of his role and Benina's. If juxtaposing Romualdo-St. Romuald seems too facile, then projecting Benina-St. Romuald as a contrasting social pair will help to define both characters as the vehicles for social critique.

Having traced a history of a criticism that largely discounts or overlooks Romualdo's cultural referents, this chapter will focus on reconstructing the symbolism of Misericordia's famed priest, considering him within a context that a contemporaneous Catholic readership would more likely have recognized. As I have already noted, standard interpretations that have named the character's most suggestive association with

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[215] Russell comments, "Don Romualdo's appearance is not simply a caprice designed to show Benina as creator of reality, however. It is a strictly functional element: 'By no means irrelevant is the fact that Don Romualdo . . . actually intervenes in the action and brings about a solution to the problems of the characters'" ("The Christ Figure in Misericordia" 61). To make this point, he will almost ironically quote Livingstone, who seems to share Russell's approach but overall, as I have argued, tends to fall into the category of critics at whom the Russell critique is directed or those tending to ignore the novel's religious semantics for its mechanics.

the Catholic icon St. Romuald have nevertheless failed to develop this connection. Thus, I will begin in the next section by reclaiming this symbolic potential, demonstrating how the very first mention of Romualdo in the narrative will initially recall the most basic iconography and cultural markings of the historical saint.

As I outline these references, I will also suggest that the novelist would thereafter begin to significantly alter this same analogy of priest-saint. Turning to a series of three scenes that critical tradition has generally seen as the character's development as "flesh and blood," I will demonstrate how a contemporaneous reader's cultural expectations would implicitly consider these scenes as either confirming or denying the priest's association with the saint. As symbolic clues given in answer, I will specify the new label "Cedrón" (as a past scholarship has not) as a charged biblical proper name and symbol. This new labeling will not only deny Galdós's priest as representing St. Romuald but moreover will symbolically help to distinguish him as a narrative antagonist to too-simple analogies.

A Catholic Case of Mistaken Identity: Doña Paca's Miscalculation and the Intrusion of "Cedrón"

For the purposes of this reading, it is significant that Don Romualdo appears first in name, not in body, in a scene that most fundamentally unfolds a central dramatic irony of the narrative: the ongoing deceptions that exist between Benina and her employer Doña Paca. In the scene sequence just prior, Benina has appeared very much the ruffian in her extorting money from a poor cohort, Almudena, and he in turn from his drunken roommate.[216] Continuing to develop, but now acting as Doña Paca's deceiver, Benina

[216] In my chapter "Benina's Denial of the 'Saint' in St. Rita," I discussed these actions in terms of Benina's first degraded version of a miracle, which begins to shed doubt on her as representing the miraculous intercessor St. Rita.

will make a series of hasty purchases with the funds (although, notably, purchasing household aliments) and arrive late to prepare lunch, and thus to preserve bourgeois conventions at the cost of her peers and her own integrity. Greeted by a mildly incensed "señora," who will initially oblige her servant to account for her whereabouts, Benina for her part will take the conversational defensive. And, talking over her maid here, Paca will provide many of the answers to her own inquiries:

> "No me lo expliques--dijo la señora . . . . Ya estoy al tanto. Al oír las doce, la una, las dos, me decía yo: 'Pero, Señor, por qué tarda tanto la Nina?' Hasta que me acordé . . .
>
> "Justo."
>
> "Me acordé . . . como tengo en mi cabeza todo el almanaque . . . de que hoy es San Romualdo, confesor y obispo de Farsalia . . .
>
> "Cabal."
>
> "Y son días del señor sacerdote en cuya casa estás de asistenta."
>
> "Si yo pensara que usted la había adivinar, habría estado más tranquila--afirmó la criada, que en su extraordinaria capacidad para forjar y exponer mentiras, supo aprovechar el sólido cable que su ama le arrojaba . . .
>
> "Habrás tenido que dar un gran almuerzo. Ya me lo figuro. !Y que no serán cortos de tragaderas los curánganos de San Sebastián, compañeros y amigos de tu Don Romualdo!" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 97-98)

Here Paca points to the coincidence of the present (narrative) day with that of St. Romuald, the Spanish "San Romualdo." In this way, the priest's name alone will become the answer to Benina's returning home late: the maid's charitable employer or Don Romualdo, she will reason, must have delayed Benina with extra preparations on the feast day of his namesake. Religion here serves at best as a social excuse.

Even as Paca absolves her maid, Benina's own patronizing responses will suggest that her employer has been fed the story of the priest at some prior moment and has

accepted it as a salvational truth, which then becomes an excuse for many social and domestic situations. And as another intrinsic irony set up the scene then, it will be Paca herself who acts as co-conspirator (however an ignorant one) in embellishing the outright lie of the priest. The upshot of Benina's lie and Paca's surmised truth will be more, however, than a meaningless gesture of deception. Rather, the invented Romualdo will also come to define a very particular gesture of charity on Benina's part: she is only her mistress' keeper but spares her the humiliation of knowing that she is being maintained by a beggar's money.

With Don Romualdo now emerging as this kind of charitable lie, the real product of this scene's deceit for the good Catholic reader will be an early indication of Romualdo's problematic representation of St. Romuald, as revealed by the Roman Catholic convention of the calendar of saints.[217] In this scene, that very calendar that is used as a reference for Catholics appears as distorted as Paca uses it to provide her with a rather mundane existential comfort (where is lunch?). But, culturally, that deception is marked very explicitly as framing a certain mindset: the calendar's enumeration of patrons or protectors would have each day presented new possibilities to the devout of how to understand their suffering and find relief from it.

Holding its place in the history of the institutional church as well, the calendar of saints was formalized in the sixteenth century, when a widely and rapidly expanding

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[217] The traditional church calendar is in fact organized by two overlapping cycles, the temporal (Temporale) and sanctoral (Sanctorale). The temporal cycle or organizer of the church year commemorates the mysteries of the life of Christ (e.g., Easter, the central feast, marks His Resurrection or rising from the dead) in a progression beginning with Christmas (Advent) and continuing with Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, and Pentecost. The sanctoral cycle or that of the saints essentially or appends commemorations of selected saints to the temporal, on which it is dependent. The commemoration of saints by calendar feast day, like the recognition of the saints themselves, is largely a practice of the Roman Catholic church, while reformist churches (e.g., Lutheran, Anglican, Calvinist) have varied in their observances of this cycle. For this definition and the reflections that directly follow in the text, I rely on Lawrence S. Cunningham's introduction and overview A Brief History of Saints, Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005) (for the above, 78-81).

Catholic institution was at pains to promote uniformity among its parishes--uniform worship of the saints would help centralize and standardize devotion. By effectively providing a daily dose of sanctified heroes and heroines to be commemorated or celebrated on a given feast day within the church, its parishioners would have been provided, not only with more miraculous possibilities, but with a common blueprint on which to pattern their own lives within a universal church. Exemplary lives of saints were thus deliberately and liberally chosen for this purpose. Putting the cultural resources of the calendar to work but for his own purposes, Galdós will evoke his Romualdo in the very context in which the sacred figure would likely have been most familiar to Catholic readers, as the saint of a specific universal calendar day. Thus, the novelist will seem to have made the initial choice to evoke a general orthodoxy as a kind of overall cultural literacy of the era, but one that I will argue subsequently as narrowing to a more local critical reference.[218]

One of the long-standing exemplary figures of the church, Romualdo's feast day was added to the universal liturgy in the late-sixteenth century and has remained so until this day.[219] As a saint distinguished in this manner, Romuald would have assumed a role in the spiritual life of many Catholics attending church regularly. While an identifiable

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[218] I can make no claim as to Romualdo's appearance on Madrid's local calendar of saints. Later in this chapter, certain occurrences of the figure in local lore that I reveal may indicate this fact, but further research is required before the calendar itself may be included as evidence of a local gesture here.

[219] The older source Butler, Thurston, and Attwater's Butler's Lives of the Saints (pub. and rev. 1756-1956) notes that Romuald's feast day of February 7 (corresponding to the translation of his incorrupt bodily remains in the year 1481) was added to the universal calendar by Pope Clement VIII in 1595. More contemporary sources will note that the saint is still memorialized in the universal church (surviving drastic cuts made just after Vatican II in the numbers of European, particularly Italian and French, saints represented by a several centuries old calendar) but the feast day has been moved to correspond with his death, June 19. For the latter perspective, I rely on both "Romuald of Ravenna," The Oxford Dictionary of Saints, 2003, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 27 March 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu> and B. Hamilton, "Romuald, St," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2nd ed. 2003. Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 28 March 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>. Also, for a note on the change in the calendar date, I rely on Kevin Orlin Johnson's Why Do Catholics Do That?: A Guide to the Teachings and Practices of the Catholic Church, New York: Ballantine, 1994) 81.

figure for a Catholic, however, Romuald would not likely have elicited the same universal popular affections as, for example, a St. Rita of Cascia, who is claimed widely as a patron for some of humanity's most common afflictions--the loneliness, sickness, marital distress, for example, that Rita herself suffered (see my Chapter Two). More narrow in this regard, Romuald is claimed almost uniquely by the Benedictines to be one of the four founders and reformers of the Order (along with Sts. Benedict, Scholastica, and sometimes Bernard). Outside of this group, he is claimed as the patron of particular places and places of worship, such as the municipality of Bonarcado on the Italian island of Sardinia and the church "Saint Romuald" in Hardinsburg, Kentucky--although in the United States, likely the only parish to adopt him as such.[220]

In a sense more Benedictine than universally Catholic, St. Romuald's imagery and iconography will be tailored to this specific patronage. He appears in images as somewhat aged and white-bearded, seated under a tree, pointing to a vision of white clad monks ascending a ladder to heaven (as emblazoned on stained glass windows, e.g., at Saint Romuald's in Kentucky[221]). This scene is also to have been a revelatory vision that

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[220] Apart from what would appear his most obvious patronage, to that of the Benedictine Order, the most common reference sources on the saint that one which expect to encapsulate this data (saints' dictionaries, religious encyclopedias, etc.) nevertheless fail to mention it, nor any patronage at all, which may also give some indication of the little cultural value or relevance placed on this saint as the "patron" or protector in "patron saint." Romuald is mentioned as being the Benedictine patron in "Romuald," Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1979), Google Book Search, Google, 27 March 2008 <http://books.google.com/>. But this patronage is not mentioned in the updated entry of a new edition of the same work "Romuald," Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), NetLibrary, University of Texas Libraries, 27 March 2008 <http://www.netlibrary.com/>. As for his patronage of places, I have had to resort to open searches on the web to come across even those examples that I cite in my text. The mentions were found in both "Bonarcado," Comuni-Italiani.it, 2004-08, 27 March 2008 <http://www.comuni-italiani.it/> (an official index of Italian provinces and regions; search for Bonarcado) and Saint Romuald Catholic Church. 27 March 2008 <http://www.owensborodio.org/parishes/romuald-ky-hrdbg/> (an information page about Saint Romuald Catholic Church off the homepage of the diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky; use the direct link provided here). (YouTube, interestingly, features a recent sequence from local celebrations of his feast in Bonarcado, where his image is paraded around town on some out-of-control tractor flatbeds--some indication that Romuald's patronage might be a problematic in the very localized popular realm.)

[221] For the church window, see Saint Romuald Catholic Church website, but use link particularly <http://www.owensborodio.org/parishes/romuald-ky-hrdbg/window.html>.

he, like the biblical figure Jacob, had in the course of his life--although, for Romuald, the white of the monk's attire would specify the future colors of robes for the order he founded, the Camaldolese Order.[222] Romuald will further be represented as holding a skull or a crutch, traditional symbols in Christian art, respectively, of death and contemplation and of the aged, pilgrims, and beggars (interesting to note for my purposes later).[223] As Catholics have known the historical Romuald as this kind of cultural set piece, the key to Galdós's use of the figure will lie in the fact that his readership would not necessarily have found him represented this way in the narrative Don Romualdo.

Returning to the scene in question but with some of the saint's detail now in mind, the naming of "Romualdo," as it recalls the historical Romuald, begins to come across as less certain, less secure and more open to question. And an initiated reader, I argue, would not have been long in recognizing the moment at which this suggested analogy shows signs of unraveling. Remarking first in this scene Doña Paca's show of Catholic prowess when she recalls the precise date of Romuald's feast at will (she has the entire saints' almanac memorized), this gesture would have likely for a Catholic first opened the question "does Paca get the date right?" Yet as the question itself is left overtly unanswered here, it will be for the faithful (already in the know about the actual date) to thumb back through the chapters to fact check the haughty bourgeois by finding a mention there of narrative time. Coming upon a vivid scene describing, notably, a March wind's icy gusts ("[u]na mañana de marzo, ventosa y glacial . . ." [Pérez Galdós,

[222] In other accounts, a lord Madolus (Madolo?) is to have had this vision before, that is, donating the land on which Romuald would build his famous monastery Campus Maldoli or, later, Camaldoli (after its benefactor). My source for these details is Leslie A. St. L. Toke, "St. Romuald," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1912, New Advent, 7 May 2008 < http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13179b.htm>.
[223] For Romuald's iconography, I use Hall, "Romuald," Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art (see 267, 333); Hall, "crutch," Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art; Hall, "skull," Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art; "Romuald, St," The Hutchinson Dictionary of Symbols in Art (Abingdon: Helicon, 2005), NetLibrary, University of Texas Libraries, 27 March 2008 <http://www.netlibrary.com/> and "crutch," The Hutchinson Dictionary of Symbols in Art (Abingdon: Helicon, 2005), NetLibrary, University of Texas Libraries, 27 March 2008 <http://www.netlibrary.com/>.

Misericordia, 1982: 65]), this detail would have immediately shown Paca's original calculation to have been made in error. That is to say, with not more than a day's narrative time passing between the scenes, she would be assigning thus a March date to the fixed celebration of a feast known to occur each February 7.

But with the wrong date noted, what significance ought a reader ascribe to it? Kirby, who has made the Romualdo-St. Romuald connection, will read this moment as either a quaint descriptive realism, showing thoughtlessness or forgetfulness on the part of the character, or an error on the part of the author (102, fn, 194). While this kind of determination well could be the case, there is no more reason here to assume the casual irrelevance of this discrepancy, I argue, than the absolute intention of it. And, as I have already demonstrated (e.g., as Benina's garbanzo begins to deny her as a St. Rita; see my Chapter Two), such details in Galdós will typically serve as good qualifiers of otherwise tempting analogies. If Doña Paca cited the feast day in error or, rather, if Galdós did, then the novelist, in my estimation, would have done so to point toward a problem of representation, and more than just to make a simple nod to false piety.

Hinted at in this scene, the further specification of Don Romualdo in relation to St. Romuald will subsequently build in the narrative through a series of three scenes. On the surface developing Romualdo as flesh and blood, the series will nonetheless give clear indication of the novel's consciously limited narrative perspective, using the figure as a mechanism that allows the novelist to refer to different narrative traditions (e.g., biblical) in which a three-fold revelation, questioning, or denial will create a suspenseful and suspended story arc.

This first scene, occurring at the close of Chapter 28, recounts the events that were to have taken place in the Doña Paca household in Benina's absence, or during the time in which she was called away on a lengthy errand. As Paca tells it, the priest had

apparently rung at the door but was not shown the way in, as per her own instruction to a neighbor's child (Celedonia), who was to refuse all callers in case they might be unpaid merchants or money collectors. Not herself having seen him, Doña Paca must rely here for her own story on the one recounted to her,[224] making Romualdo the substance of a kind of twice-told tale to which the reader will become, as will Benina, a mere secondary reader or recipient.

The second scene, occurring at the beginning of Chapter 31, brings the priest into the narrative, but nonetheless limits his appearance to the backdrop. Here, through Benina's eyes, the reader will spy the suspect priest on a narrative plane upstage from the central action of the scene, as he consorts with a young curate in front of San Andrés, the church where Benina and Almudena will have now taken up begging. As the curate approaches Benina to converse with her, the other priest will continue moving through the backdrop scene to enter a nearby building. And it is only then, in her conversation with the curate, that Benina will be made aware of his identity, once he has become less accessible to her (and to the narrative camera). While exposed as existing physically, Romuald nevertheless remains more or less a figment or a delusion--still suspensefully denied existence as a principle character and, moreover, as a more readable symbol.[225]

The third scene at last gives center stage to the priest, qualifying his figure with what would have been familiar points of reference for a Catholic reader. Occurring in Chapters 32 and 33, it will be sequenced in the aftermath of Benina's incarceration and, particularly, as Doña Paca and her distance relative Francisco Ponte Delgado become

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[224] As the only eye witness in this chain of related accounts, the child nonetheless will claim the priest's identity to be "Romualdo" relaying it thus by his direct instruction, which Paca then reproduces for Benina as the following: "'Dile a tu señora que ha estado aquí D. Romualdo'" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 231) ["'Tell your mistress that Don Romuald has called'" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 187}].

[225] The two scenes might further offer a dramatic indication of the stunted narrative life span that the "good priest Romualdo," still in the reflection here of a St. Romuald (to be discussed later in this chapter).

disquieted and grieved at what they perceive to be the maid's unexplained disappearance. Just as they resign themselves to the inaction that may come of despair, a ringing of the doorbell announces a repeat visit from Don Romualdo who, in this third approach to, is now permitted entrance Benina's world--but a world that this protagonist otherwise seems to have abandoned. Anticipating bad news, Paca will begin by making inquiries almost without introductions. She does this, perhaps not unreasonably so, given that she feels in presence of a priest who, through Benina, she has come to know and who then she would further expect to know her. But sensing that the bourgeois woman has confused him with someone else, the priest feels the obligation to more formally introduce himself, thus stating his full name as "Romualdo Cedrón."[226] He explains further that one of their wealthy relatives has died, leaving them a substantial inheritance.

Accepting this salvation, Paca is nonetheless less willing to accept that the priest who extends it may be any other than Benina's original Don Romualdo. When she inquires further, Cedrón will neither be able to confirm his supposed bishopric, the niece he was to have, nor the church at which he was to preside. Finally, though, he will concede one detail that for Paca jives with prior elaborations of the character she knows. He will describe an aged female beggar with a forehead wart--a perfect description of Benina--but who, to Paca's great shock, he has seen begging outside his church in the

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[226] The scene runs as follows:

> "Señora mía, dijo el sacerdote con impaciente franqueza, ávido de aclarar las cosas. Yo no le traigo a usted noticias buenas ni malas de la persona por quien llora, ni sé qué persona es esa, ni en qué se funda usted para creer que yo . . .
>
> Dispénseme, Sr. D. Romualdo. Pensé que la Benina, mi criada, mi amiga y compañera más bien, había sufrido algún grave accidente en su casa de usted, o al salir de ella, o en la calle, y . . .
>
> ¿Qué más? . . . Sin duda, señora Doña Francisca Juárez, hay en esto un error que yo debo desvanecer, diciendo a usted mi nombre: Romualdo Cedrón. He desempeñado durante veinte años el arciprestazgo de Santa María de Ronda, y vengo a manifestar a usted, por encargo expreso de los demás testamentarios, la última voluntad del que fue mi amigo del alma, Rafael García de los Antrines, que Diós tenga en su santa gloria." (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 260)

company of the Moor Almudena (a confirming cross reference, but from a reverse perspective, of Benina's own sighting of Romualdo in the second scene). Refusing to believe him, Paca insists now that the explanation must lie in the priest's modesty: he would likely out of modesty avoid making direct reference to his previous kindness (e.g., employing Benina and sending table scraps) and, in short, to having acted in the role of "santo" ["saint"], a title that is his due.[227] As Cedrón will suspect these to be the ramblings of an old woman who is losing her senses, he will, without contradicting, take his leave and promise to return with paperwork. But, even as he will fulfill this promise, he will never in fact do so in any recounted scene, regressing henceforth to the status of a third person reference.

This series of scenes, the last particularly, has been most commonly read as figuring Romualdo, in extension of the good Benina, as saintly or messianic. Yet, it is precisely here, I maintain, that the character would not have appeared as such for a Catholic readership. The key here will be the conversion of "Romualdo" to "Cedrón." "Cedrón" in its Spanish translation as "great cedar tree" may be argued to be an Old Testament allusion to Christ, thus pointing to that figuration in the character.[228] But, in

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[227] Again, the moment from the text:

> "Usted me negará que la conoce, por hacer un misterio de su virtud y santidad; pero esto not le vale, no señor. A mí me consta que es usted santo, y que no quiere que le descubran sus secretos de caridad sublime; y como me consta, lo digo. Busquemos, pues, a Nina, y cuando a mi compañía vuelva, gritaremos las dos: ¡Santo, santo, santo!" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 269)

[228] To take the passage linking man and tree in earnest here, as Kirby does, is to follow a symbolic red herring, in my estimation. A closer look at the narrative passage, which the critic cites as proof thereof, will reveal it to be the substance, rather, of more subtle character subjectivities and ironies. For example, the passage will appear in the narrative set in at a moment just after the news of the inheritance puts Paca and Ponte both into a state of shock and Ponte (having taken his seat) will look up at Cedrón but dizzily. Only then, with a wider view of this context, will the description appear (blocked in the same paragraph the begins with Ponte's disorientation) to proceed from Ponte's own fired off metaphors and thus of the very active imagination of a Quixotic type rather than any more objective narrative voice. Additionally, where the analogy itself (just after Kirby stops citing) will notably slip into details that will no longer implicate Romualdo as a modest servant of the church--one who a Doña Paca might call "saint"--but rather a comfortable bourgeois himself (i.e., sturdy and stable, good and charitable, with common sense, who dresses neatly, eats hardily, smokes a good number of cigars, hunts regularly, etc.). The focus coming to rest on the beauty of the priest's face, Romualdo will now be drawn as that of a classically inspired

my reading, an even more common religious signification of the term becomes applicable. That is, "Cedrón," written "Cedron" and "Kidron" in English, also designates the ravine running along the eastern border of Jerusalem (separating it from the Mount of Olives) that is crossed in distress by two of the most recognizable figures in Old and New Testaments, respectively, King David of Israel and the Christian Messiah, Jesus Christ. While these stories would certainly have been familiar to the novelist's readership, it nevertheless becomes important to recount them briefly here in order to discuss how "Cedrón" might have shaded Romualdo for this readership.

Reference to the ravine appears in the greater history recounted in the Old Testament of the emerging nation Israel and of God's covenant with its people. In this story, the figure David would in his youth defeat the giant Goliath and succeed Saul as God's chosen King to reign over formerly disparate tribes of ancient Israel (whose capital would be centered in Jerusalem). A glorious figure in these early feats, David will later become a traitorous one, namely, in the accounts of his adulterous relations with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband Uriah and of his son Absalom's conspiring against him. In the latter episode, Absalom runs David out of the capital and across the "brook" Kidron (2 Samuel 15:23).[229] After crossing it himself, however, he will be slain (despite orders to take him captive), leaving the King to grieve his sins before family,

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"mascarón escultórico" ["sculptured mask"] with garlands or festoons, it is further indicated, coming out of in its mouth. Here the noble tree trunk of a priest would seem to have morphed into a church ornament--one that is architecturally pretty to look at but not made of the same natural, even biblical, strength, certainly, that a critic such as Kirby would initially have read into it.

[229] The gloss on Kidron in relation to the story of David that follows draws primarily from the basic accounts (offering biblical references) David M. Gunn, "David," The Oxford Companion to the Bible, 1993, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 5 April 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/pub/views/home.html> and from Timothy M. Willis, "Absalom," The Oxford Companion to the Bible, 1993, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 5 April 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/pub/views/home.html>. It draws further from the more detailed account of the stormy relationship between David and his son Absalom in H. J. Heuser's "Absalom," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1907, New Advent, 5 April 2008 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01058c.htm> and Francis E. Gigot's "Brook of Cedron," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1908, New Advent, 5 April 2005 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03475c.htm>.

nation, and God. Narrated now as a dynastic decline, the story of David will resolve with the coming of Christ, commonly called "Son of David," as indicating the fulfillment of an older messianic prophecy.

In the Gospels or Books of the New Testament that recount the life of Christ (in four different accounts), the Kidron reference will be reused, notably, within the story of Christ's Passion (Gigot's "Brook of Cedron" in The Catholic Encyclopedia) or what Christ suffered in the moments leading up to His crucifixion.[230] The story unfolds in Jerusalem (the historic throne and center of the kingdom of his Jewish ancestor David), where Christ would be received as the prophet of a new faith by disciples. But, nevertheless, His denouncements of the old faith and traditions would incite the anger of Jewish leaders. This mixed reception becomes the backdrop against which the prophet Christ will transfigure in an act of martyrdom into the Christian Savior. Attempting to explain the significance of this act to His closest followers, the Apostles, He leads them across the Kidron (named only in John 18:1) and up the Mount of Olives, taking only three of them with Him into what had been His private place of devotion or the garden of Gethsemane. Here, Christ not only prays but also awaits the arrival of Judas, who betrays Him by collaborating in His arrest. In these final hours, Christ's backward trek to Jerusalem takes Him, namely, back across the Kidron. Once the becoming the captive of Roman soldiers, Christ will be tried and, after a display of public disapprobation, Pontius Pilate will give the order for His execution, as a criminal, by crucifixion on a cross.

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[230] The following summary of the narrative moments of the Passion relies on both Charles H. Patterson, The New Testament: Notes (New York: Wiley, 1965) 28-29 (a useful scholarly introduction to the work) and on Richard I. Abrams and Warner A. Hutchinson, An Illustrated Life of Jesus: From the National Gallery of Art Collection (New York: Wing, 1994) 92-95 (a summary of Christ's life not only told in narrative and pictorially but also that lists for each moment its corresponding location in all Gospels). The insights here on the story are my own.

So familiar to Christians, this story and the images in it have been frequently revisited and dramatized in church sermon. On any Good Friday commemorating the crucifixion of Christ, for example, a Catholic preacher set to the task of bringing the intensity of Christ's darkest moments on Earth to life for his congregation might have lingered on the detail of His more palpable moments of suffering. Catholics, for this reason, might recall that in the garden on the eve of His crucifixion, Christ would not just agonize but break out in a "bloody sweat that oozed out of every pore," and that Judas did not just lead the soldiers to Christ to arrest Him there but would do so in a kind of twisted profanation of friendship betraying his Savior with his "false kiss." And, as part of this traditional representation, Christ would not only bound and taken back across the Kidron by His captors but would be "flung headlong into the brook Cedron" and "dragged wet and bleeding" to be tried in Jerusalem.[231]

The Kidron scene, in particular, served as an image favored by a celebrated orator and philosopher in the French Catholic church, the Sicilian-born Gioacchino Ventura di Raulica (1792-1861) or, as he was more affectionately known, "Father Ventura."[232] Likely familiar to the era's reading public, Father Ventura frequently served as the

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[231] Borrowed from a representative example of a Good Friday sermon, possibly of the period, such figures would likely have been quite common for Galdós's Catholic readership. See James Joseph Baxter, ed., Sermons from the Latins (New York: Benziger, 1902) 248. The work is a priest's early twentieth-century adaptation of some of writings and sermons of three of the most beloved Christian-Italian clerics serving the church as orators and theologians, namely, St. Robert Bellarmime (sixteenth- / seventeenth-century), Father Paolo Segneri (seventeenth century), and Padre Agostino da Montefeltro (nineteenth- / twentieth-century). Organized by as church calendar sermons (a good overview of the correspondence of the events of Christ's life with the church year as well in "Table of Contents," 7-9), Baxter does not generally indicate authorship, thus the Good Friday sermon that I cite above will remain attributable to any of the three, even partially to Baxter himself. Published prior the Baxter collection, the existence of Agostino da Montefeltro, Charles Aubrey Ansell, and H. Dalby Galli, Conferences of Agostino da Montefeltro Delivered in Rome During Lent 1889 (London: Thomas Baker, 1890 [New York: Benziger Brothers, 1890]) might itself tend to point toward the authorship of Padre Agostino, a controversial figure known for these very kinds of Lenten sermons that drew crowds of all classes.

[232] All the following biographical information on Ventura is taken from F. Andreu's "Ventura di Raulica, Gioacchino," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 5 April 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

Lenten preacher at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in the years 1841-1848. In fact, a sermon of his, delivered at that venue, appears in a popular collection of church year sermons The Catholic Pulpit (1851 ed.), claiming its purpose as "transferring the Catholic pulpit from the Church to the very dwellings of the people."[233] What follows is an excerpt from this publication, a sermon on the Passion ascribed to Father Ventura:

> The evangelists relate again, that, after he left Jerusalem, Jesus crossed the torrent of Cedron. Even this proceeding contains a mysterious sense. This torrent is that which David spoke of in a prophetic spirit: "De torrente in via bibet: propterea esaltabit caput." It signifies there, that it is the torrent of sufferings and ignominies which the Redeemer was to undergo to excess during his passage on earth, but which afterwards was to change into a flood of delights, into a subject of triumph and of glory. This torrent is called Cedron, a Hebrew word, says St. Jerome, which signifies blackish, obscure. Therefore, Jesus Christ descending in the torrent of obscurity and of darkness, is Jesus penetrating, in the darkness of night, into the profound abyss of horrors, of black ideas, of cruel hatred, of odious falsehoods, of atrocious calumnies, of injustice, of treasons, of baseness, of hypocrisy, in order to become the victim of his enemies . . . (732)

Here the preacher explains that Kidron subsumes the notion of the earthly offense to Christ in all its forms. That is, when in the Passion narrative Christ is plunged into its waters, all the sins of the world are being recalled, even Lucifer's,[234] as they would

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[233] I refer here to Ignatius Collingridge, The Catholic Pulpit, Containing a Sermon for Every Sunday and Holiday in the Year, and for Good Friday, with Several Occasional Discourses (Baltimore: J. Murphy, 1851). The citation is taken from the editorial notes on the work (see "Introduction to the First American Edition"). It is an interesting source for my purposes, as it was a serial turned monograph and was republished at least six times between 1840-1874. This would demonstrated certain popularity which the editorial notes further qualify as being "frequently demanded" by a public otherwise inconveniently distanced from their local churches. Circulated both in Great Britain and in the United States, there is some indication that it may have been translated. A Spanish-language title likely of similar genre (church year sermons) is Juan Planas, El cura en el púlpito: discursos morales, obra original predicable, compuesta en obsequio del venerable clero parroquial de España (Barcelona: Imprenta y Librería Religiosa y Científica del Heredero de D. Pablo Riera, 1871). Although destined for a more clerical audience, the work was published multiple times in Barcelona (beginning in c.1871 and ending in Misericordia's publication year) and may also contain references to Kidron in, e.g., a Good Friday sermon (although I was not able to obtain the text in order to verify).

[234] Ventura will also go on to read the vileness of Kidron as "the seat and the metropolis of the empire of Lucifer on earth" (733), where the enemy will additionally become diabolical and the conflict thus of heaven and hell. Here he makes a powerful and theologically controversial accusation, daring to locate hell on earth (which may explain its categorization as "Occasional Sermon" in The Catholic Pulpit and not one more customarily recommended for a Good Friday service).

threaten to overcome Him in a night of the soul. Yet, as the preacher also explains, Christ's very descent into Kidron (or that which it signifies) remains a part of the Divine plan. And, as a willing agent of that play, Christ will moreover undergo a transformation through this descent into glory (thus, by contrast, the symbol of the fruit of the Mount of Olives will appear, 734).

As Kidron, as a symbol, is used in David's story and then re-used in Christ's, it would contain or acquire different meanings within Church contexts. The Kidron that David, and successively Absalom, crosses signifies a passage into sin or death.[235] Before David will cross its waters again back into Jerusalem, he will grieve and seek God's forgiveness. Alternatively, the Kidron that Christ crosses would signify death only as it would be redefined as both purposeful, as in a martyrdom, and create the possibility of further passage into heaven or new life (resurrection). In this way, Kidron acts as a key in representing one of the founding tenets and central mysteries of the Christian faith: that Christ would die so that His followers would have the reward of eternal life.[236] The

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[235] The presence of Old Testament martyrs, saints, and prophets whose sepulchers line the Kidron banks--but whose stories do not necessarily have the Kidron as end point--tends to historically confirm the value placed on the ravine as this kind of point of crossing over. My source here is Francis E. Gigot, "Brook of Cedron," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1908, New Advent, 5 April 2005 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03475c.htm>.

[236] The following excerpts are taken from Pope John Paul II, "The Meaning of Suffering in the Light of Christ's Passion," Jesus Son and Savior: Catechesis on the Creed, Part II, November 9, 1988--General Audience, 1988, Internet Office of the Holy See, 25 May 2005 <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/alpha/data/aud19881109en.html>. This example will suffice to demonstrate this dogma as taught in the Roman Catholic church

> Thanks to Christ, the meaning of suffering changes radically. It no longer suffices to see in it a punishment for sin. One must discern in it the redemptive, salvitic power of love. The evil of suffering, in the mystery of Christ's redemption, is overcome and in every case transformed. It becomes a force of liberation from evil, for the victory of the good. All human sufferings, united to that of Christ, complete "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body" (cf. Col 1:24). The body is the Church as the universal community of salvation. (electronic copy has no pagination)

And,

> In what is known as his pre-paschal teaching, Jesus made it known on more than one occasion that the concept of suffering, understood exclusively as a punishment for sin, is insufficient and even incorrect. (electronic copy has no pagination)

distinction here still must be emphasized however that Kidron itself would not symbolize that new life and carries with it the connotation of suffering and struggle. It is, rather, the means to an end or the mechanism that facilitates, as a necessary evil, passage out of that state.

Such a cultural precedent would have made it likely that any character marked as "Cedrón" would have become more semantically charged in the perspective of a Catholic readership. Certainly, as Misericordia's priest makes his way into the narrative scene, he will do so layered over with a determining religious symbolism--and not that necessarily of St. Romuald. For a reader already grappling with his figural pretensions as the reflection of that historical saint, the signs and symbols of this saint that should have surrounded the narrative figure, if a Romuald, will be missing. The character will otherwise be shaded by the clear biblical reference of his other name.[237]

While the novel will present Don Romualdo as an adequate or good priest, it will all the while leave open the question of what greater glory might in fact be reached through his patronage. For this reason, as he will continue in his narrative arc, he will seem to play out the very paradox inherent in this name, serving as both obstacle and potential bridge for many of the characters. When entering the novel's argument, Cedrón will do so as a provider to the bourgeois class, bringing a legacy, and acting as a patron of a state-run poorhouse (to be discussed in detail later). But as the priest will act as the hand of state legalism in both these cases, these gestures may be understood rather as the

[237] The inference of Cedrón might be qualified as a point of general literacy. As with any literary text, there are levels of meaning that may be unpacked, reaching different readerships on different levels. In this instance, a more initiated reader (e.g., critic) may come to a more profound understanding than a general one. Nevertheless, the point to which the Cedrón analysis ultimately leads--Benina's being redrawn as St. Romuald--may still be arrived at without this biblical clue and expressed, rather, through the details of saints' lives and legends (see the section below). I offer this more demanding point of entrance to that conclusion here as a means of demonstrating the author's range as a symbolic religious writer. Overall, though, Galdós would have challenged both kinds of readers, demonstrating not only his ability to communicate in simple religious allegory but also the depth of his knowledge of the Bible and church history.

simple abandonment of any more appropriate church vision of assisting its people. Even in the instance that he seems to act as the bridge to salvation for Doña Paca and family, his patronage will end as a more obvious path to spiritual ruin. Namely, Paca's stepdaughter Juliana, usurping control of the family fortune, will teach the sponsored class to live humbly but not compassionately. (See Juliana's confession to Benina below for further explanation.)

One of the more subtle symbolic tensions built into the novel will be that which exists between the historical Romuald and Galdós's priest Don Romualdo--the latter being marked in one way but perhaps in the end transitioned by the Galdós into something different. Working through the problematics of Romualdo as a figure with various potentials in Catholic culture here may recover an important occurrence for a contemporaneous readership, that is, the narrative does not allow Romualdo to develop as his name would at first imply because he is re-labeled by the more controversial symbolism surrounding "Cedrón." The priest's new symbolism will, upon the kinds of consideration now applied to it, redefine him as less the positive religious figure than has been assumed. Moreover, as the Cedrón name clearly indicates that the narrative will undertake a martyrdom. Not surprisingly, then, the priest will tend to disappear from the foreground scene, as rapidly as he makes his appearance, and to continue rather as a disembodied nominative (in third person mentions). Despite this absence, I will contend that, with these scenes, the novelist has neither finished with St. Romuald as a signified nor with his implication as a set of cultural values to be contrasted with the priest. Lending as always to a Catholic reader the overt cues for following these kinds of re-representations or transformations, it will be by the encounter with a more active religious, a more authentic St. Romuald, as I will argue now, that the re-development of this cultural icon and the socio-cultural commentary that he makes will begin to unfold.

Crossing the Manzanares as Crossing into the Symbolic World of St. Romuald

Revealed as the double voiced naming of Galdós's priest, the references to St. Romuald and Kidron both will continue to be useful in unlocking a new and more affirmative reading of Benina. These figures elucidate previously explicated narrative moments, such as the miracle scenes, where St. Rita's narratives have pointed to Benina as the critic's failed saint. Still relying on the good Catholic as a good reader of signs and symbols in how St. Romuald is represented in the text, it is straightforward to move beyond previously employed interpretive tools (e.g., saints' days, familiar sermon materials) to recover further textual elements referring to the saint's life and legend, by which a Catholic of the time would likely have known him as a wanderer on a spiritual journey. In this new light, Benina, moving away from the central milieu of the narrative, will now indeed appear as this saint's double. But it is the particularities of this story, which Kidron will help to redefine as transformative in a particular way, which will provide the narrative guide for reading Benina, and not Don Romualdo, as a prospective St. Romuald.

As common a resource as the saint's calendar and the Bible would have been for a Catholic readership, so too would have been narratives of saint's lives. These narratives, classified more precisely as hagiographic writings, constitute one of the most significant repositories of Christian culture, treating the saints more extensively (e.g., than calendars) and structuring the worship of them.[238] Historically, this body of writings would begin as

[238] For these definitions and the brief history that follows, I draw mainly from F. Halkin, "Hagiography," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2nd ed., 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 28 March 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/> (an essentially bibliographic entry). For the Golden Legend, in particular, I draw from Alain Boureau, "Golden Legend," Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, 2001, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 25 April 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/pub/views/home.html> and from Cunningham 31-36.

more specialized or as scholarly collections of historical memoirs, pious biographies, and liturgical texts in what early Western tradition would know as the "Roman legendary." Collections at the beginning of the thirteenth century, however, would begin to take more popular forms, often described at their height as "modern romance" (Woodward, 74; Cunningham, 32). In the most famous of these variants, the "Legenda Aurea" ["Golden Legend"] (complied c.1260) would draw synthetically on sources including Christian tall tales and folklore and, notably, condense and translate entries from the Latin into vernaculars.[239] While this collection enjoyed great popularity through the fifteenth and into the sixteenth centuries, the Romantic Age's answer to it would be Roman Catholic priest Alban Butler's classic collection. His work first appeared in 1756 (first Spanish translation in 1789) as Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints . . .[240] (only in later and more modern editions, as Butler's Lives of the Saints).[241] In runaway popularity this collection would be continually revised, updated, and reprinted through the late twentieth century. And, within that time, its synthesis of profiles of both universally and locally venerated Catholic saints (presented in convenient order of the liturgical calendar) would have made it an been an indispensable resource by which any Catholic reader of Galdós would have come to know Romuald.[242]

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[239] The earliest Spanish translation that I have found dates from 1499.

[240] Alban Butler, The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints: Compiled from Original Monuments and Other Authentic Records, Illustrated with the Remarks of Judicious Modern Critics and Historians (London: [?], 1756).

[241] Referring to the most common reference works for English-speaking Roman Catholics, Cunningham specifies, for the Bible, the Douai-Rheims translation and, for the book of prayers, The Garden of the Soul in addition Butler's Lives of the Saints (5). In Halkin, "hagiography," New Catholic Encyclopedia, the latter work is equally noted as one of the all-time most popular collections.

[242] My preliminary research on the publishing history of Butler's collection in Spain indicates that, in the mid- to late-nineteenth century or the period in question particularly, it was integrated into Golden Legend collections but as supplementary notes. These collections tended to be comprehensive and organized for the convenience of the penitent, including a range of scholars notes, updated calendars, indexes, etc., as may be demonstrated by the title alone of this representative printing: La leyenda de oro para cada día del año, vidas de todos los santos que venera la Iglesia: Contiene, toda la obra de Ribadeneira, las noticias de Croisset, Butler, Godescart, etc., el martirologio romano con sus adiciones hasta el presente año y un

As his story opens in Butler's version, Romuald of Ravenna (952-1027), of Italian ducal lineage, "grew up a worldly youth and a slave to his passions,"[243] but would throughout his life reject aristocratic privilege in strategic ways in favor of cultivating a humbled existence within the church. The pivotal moment in his life would come early as he witness his father kill a kinsman in a duel, a historically customary means for nobles to settle disputes or questions of honor. Interpreting what he saw as a crime rather than a privilege, young Romuald would seek atonement by renouncing his birthright and entering the religious orders as a Benedictine monk--eventually, influencing his father to do the same. Thereafter, impressed by the severities of the monastic life he would observe in Catalonia, Spain, at the abbey San Miguel-de-Cuxa (c.978), Romuald would co-found a nearby hermitage, or community of hermits. There he would influence a growing number of disciples, notably, the former doge of Venice (also converted by Romuald). Returning to Italy some years later to spiritually refortify his father who was having doubts about his own vows, he would thus adopt a lifestyle that persisted for the next 30 years, wandering through northern and central Italy. On this journey, he would found monasteries and hermitages, where fellow monastics (converted aristocrats among those) might live out such dedicated lives.[244] Of the monasteries, the Camaldoli in Arezzo in Tuscany (1023-27) would become after his death the "motherhouse" of an eremitical congregation, the Camaldolese, which would honor the observances that Romuald would append to the Benedictine rule.

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vocabulario alfabético de todos los santos con indicacion del día en que se encuentra su vida, 5a ed., 4 vols. (Barcelona: L. González, 1896-97). Beginning again in the early to mid-twentieth century, the Golden Legend and Butler's Lives of the Saints appear in separate translated editions. For further comment on authorship, general publishing history, and format, see Cunningham 5-7.

[243] My sources for the following basic biography on the saint naturally include Butler's Lives of the Saints but also St. L. Toke, "St. Romuald," The Catholic Encyclopedia. For dates, I rely on B. Hamilton's "St. Romuald," New Catholic Encyclopedia.

[244] In this way, he might make possible the kind of "white" or extended martyrdom that a figure such as St. Rita would seek (see my chapter "Benina's Denial of the 'Saint' in St. Rita") by requesting missionary work in Hungary. But, he would not himself become a martyr.

St. Romuald's life as a spiritual journey (N.B., not that of a martyr) straightforwardly illuminates one reading of Benina's path in the narrative, much more than it might the fictional Don Romualdo's. The path that takes her on a journey much like his will first be marked in Misericordia by the protagonist's decision to leave her familiar urban setting. In the novel, initially, this pivotal moment will appear more as brief interruption from the main narrative as Benina will be obligated to set on a mission of mercy, to retrieve Almudena from a remote locale (an infamous city slum) outside the city. Yet, as she will leave the city with this intention on three separate occasions and more permanently by the novel's conclusion, she will seem set on the more recognizable course of a journey. This journey, moreover, will be marked by the common motifs of wandering in the desert (as her search at first proves futile), moments of spiritual encounter (as she will observe Almudena's Mt. Sinai scene), and trials along the road (as she will be abused in her charity by tenement dwellers).

In the first of these episodes (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 224-29), she will start out moving south on the Calle de Toledo. Meeting along that road a fellow beggar, with whom she will inquire after Almudena's whereabouts, she will be directed further along towards the Puente de Toledo or a bridge crossing the Manzanares river and leading to the suburbs. Before arriving there, however, she will inquire again at a community of gypsies and will be directed more precisely to the slum las Cambroneras, to the north, where Almudena had apparently lodged the evening prior. Not crossing then, she will take a course towards the Imperial railway station (vulgarly called "las Pulgas" ["the fleas"]) and will wander further and further north but to no avail. Resolving to take up her mission again on the following day, she will hear recounted that same day upon her return to the city the first off-scene appearance of Don Romualdo.

Heading the same course south, the second episode (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 231-41) will provide the protagonist more sightings of the figure that she seeks. First, however, it will be the unfortunate Silvero who will recount his story of Don Romualdo, as the priest whose promise of salvation had come to nothing.[245] Performing here her second miracle, Benina will save the man's child, in the priest's stead, by preparing a hot soup. Thereafter, she will be led again by news of Almudena back to las Pulgas station. From this vantage point, she will at last see him across the train yard reclining as if dead, having made his way up a mound of refuse and rubble. As she makes her own way up, so will begin the Mt. Sinai scene. Here, each will attempt to persuade the other to make a change in physical circumstance: Almudena for his part coaxing Benina like a sentimental lover (singing and strumming the sitar in this syncretic show of ritual) into moving out of the city, and Benina for her part bribing her courtier with food and the impending threat of starvation to return to the city. Neither budging, however, Almudena will stay, and Benina will return home that evening, again obliged to return the next day.

Benina will for a third time make her way out of the city proper (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 242-49) to bring back her charge. Knowing where to find him now, she nevertheless will be waylaid by what I have called her third failed miracle. Already stretched in her modest resources, Benina will here become the unwilling saintly protagonist fulfilling a chain of charitable demands of a hungry mob. Honored thus until reaching the end of her purse strings, this beggar-saint, now turned "sham saint," will

[245] As recounted here in a third person narrative, Silvero will try to rationalize the failure of the priest's promise to secure a place for his granddaughters in a poorhouse: "[h]abía encontrado un alma caritativa, un señor eclesiástico, que le ofreció meter a las nenas en un Asilo; pero cuando creía tener arreglado el negocio, venía el demonio adescomponerlo" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 232) ["{h}e had met a charitable soul, a Reverend, who offered to put the girls into a home but when he thought it was all fixed up, the devil spoilt it all" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 188}].

thereafter be forced to make a hasty retreat off the scene in a narrative moment critiquing the saint-devout paradigm (via the local benefactor Doña Guillermina). Once again reaching Almudena's Mt. Sinai, though, both Benina and Almudena will feel the weight of the day's charitable fallout, narrowly escaping the affronts of the community. As this return trip to the city will take the form of a flight, it will nevertheless be eased to a certain degree by a Christian and his wife. First suggesting that the two seek the aid of Don Romualdo, these Christians will offer to shelter Almudena for a night or two but only in exchange for the old woman's last coin. Without further funding, Benina will otherwise be obligated to return to begging and, thus, to the city--temporarily suspending progress on her journey.

Once she arrives back in familiar haunts, however, her troubles will be multiplied by more debts and charitable burdens. And in response, Benina will step up her begging, but not without being made to pay. Taking her place in another beggars' lineup outside a new parish church, it is here that she will become the eyewitness of the second sighting of Don Romualdo, although in the background of that scene. At the very next moment, Benina will be hauled off (with Almudena in willing tow) to beggar's prison. And once she is thus incapacitated, Don Romualdo will appear fully (both in the flesh and in the foreground) to Paca and Ponte at the apartment, bringing the news of the inheritance. When Benina reemerges on the scene--retrieved by some locals in a Quixotesque caper--, the transaction will have been concluded, and she will find Paca relocated and under the dominion of her stepdaughter Juliana (who takes control of household affairs when Paca and her frivolous daughter prove incapable). Here, Benina will suffer the humiliation of being refused at the door and otherwise offered her final wages. What would otherwise seem to create "salvation" for Paca then will nevertheless become for Benina an ultimate rejection.

Thus rejected, the protagonist's prospects at first seem bleak and she will move with Almudena back to his city hovel. But, later, she will be inspired to move even further away, that is, to the "Jerusalem" of which the blind man has often spoken and of which she reminds him here: "Vámonos, Almudena, vámonos de aquí, y quiera Dios que te pongas bueno pronto para tomar el caminito a Jerusalén, que no me asusta ya por lejos. Andando, andando, hijo, se llega de una parte del mundo al otra" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 310). Readjusted within Benina's vision, though, the narrative road to Jerusalem (the symbolism of the locale I will deal with below) turns out to be a familiar one. It leads back to the Puente de Toledo, the bridge, but this time also across it to the suburbs, where the two will not have previously ventured. Heading the most southward course now, Benina will choose to set up house with Almudena in "una casita, que más bien parecía choza" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 316), that is, a little hut.

A journey that begins in Madrid and ends in its outskirts, seen in overview and in the light that Kidron and St. Romuald as accessible Catholic references shed on it, will provide a new frames of reference for considering both Don Romualdo and Benina. Before taking this detour, the narrative had set up some fairly simple analogies, Benina de Casia as St. Rita of Cascia and Don Romualdo as St. Romuald. Yet, in the course of the protagonist's journey, each of these namesake associations is otherwise brought into question, as developed in the scene sequences that I have been detailing throughout this project. Benina, recall, began to appear less and less a Rita, a miraculous intercessor, in the miracle scenes (already prior and on her search for Almudena). Don Romualdo, not taking the journey himself, nevertheless appears less and less a St. Romuald and more a "Cedrón," while Benina's journey is still in its first phases (her detainment in the poorhouse back in Madrid being followed by his full emergence). While the life of these two analogies end here, the protagonist's trajectory, however, continues.

Benina's allusion to St. Romuald within the narrative span of this journey will present yet a third analogy (a third symbolic mystery for a Catholic reader to unfold), but a one that will have already begun with her progressive failure to portray an orthodox St. Rita. Returning to the third miracle scene, Benina's association with St. Rita would seem to end cruelly, almost comically, as Benina unwittingly angers the mob of hungry peasants mistaking her for the more traditional saint of their expectation. As this crowd demands more charity than she as makeshift benefactor can provide, she will be forced to use diversionary tactics. She distracts the needy with yet another disbursement of bread so that she may flee the scene, narrowly escaping with Almudena when the community's show of anger turns eventually to a stoning. It is at this point, though, that her near martyrdom is not fulfilled that a Catholic reader would have had the first real sense, I would argue, of St. Romuald.

In the developing analogy of Benina-St. Romuald, this episode will refer to familiar folklore, a scandalous tale in fact, of Romuald's own near assault by fanatical followers during his time spent in the borderlands of France and Spain.[246] The tale appears both in French and Spanish Christian legend, and, as it was so scandalous, its French chronicler was to have reset it in Spanish Catalonia; and its Spanish one, in French Aquitaine (Hartland 177). Both chroniclers would nonetheless recount that Romuald had achieved a wide reputation of sanctity. And the inhabitants in that country, having grown accustomed to his presence and the distinction it brought them, would

[246] The episode that I recount, which a Spanish-Catholic of the time may have read or heard retold appears in James R. Foster, "St. Romuald," The World's Great Folktales (New York: Harper, 1953) and in William S. Walsh, "Romuald, St.," Curiosities of Popular Customs and of Rites, Ceremonies, Observances, and Miscellaneous Antiquities (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1897), Google Book Search, Google, 27 March 2008 <http://books.google.com/>, both of which serve as my sources here. Relatively more interesting for its time of publication, Walsh's collection mentions an earlier source in the English Romantic poet Robert Southey (1774-1843), who recounts the episode humorously (arguably, as Galdós does in this third miracle scene). E. Sidney Hartland, "The Cult of Executed Criminals at Palermo," Folklore 21.2 (June 1910): 168-79, JSTOR, University of Texas Libraries, 7 May 2008 <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/> also mentions particulars on Southey's retelling (177).

consequently not take well his intentions of departing it. Seeking to maintain the holy presence of their saint at all costs, they would determine to slay or strangle him (moreover his remains, after his death, would likely work miracles). But, as the tale goes, the good Romuald, hearing of the plan, would flee the country before he could be so "honored."[247]

For a readership that was expecting the reflection of a martyr-saint (perhaps a failing one), the entrance of St. Romuald here would have been, on many levels, unorthodox. On a narrative level, this would be the first moment when references to St. Romuald would have appeared to intrude within a clearly other story. Recall that the priest Don Romualdo would have been developing simultaneously but separately in the Madrid scenes and would only later be stopped in his development as a St. Romuald by "Cedrón." On a figural religious level, this Romuald would have claimed a sacrilege, as other versions of the tale had not, as a native incident--albeit one made more palatable to a Madrid readership by its setting in and among the fanatical peasantry. What would be then two improper gestures tied together as near-scandal in the narrative scene, would serve to introduce yet another immediate impropriety: the figural switch of Benina, from acting as a version of a St. Rita figure into one of St. Romuald.

Entering the narrative by more orthodox means than the fictional Romualdo had, Rita will nevertheless have failed by this moment in the text to provide Benina with a workable cultural model--the novel is balancing off two different saints' lives, to see which one is a closer fit in prefiguring the heroine. Benina's story, as St. Rita's, would begin as determined artificially by social scripts. A young Rita, recall, would feel drawn to enter the religious orders, yet she will out of a sense of social duty to provide for her

[247] Another version of the tale in which Romuald will shave his head and pretend to have gone mad appears recounted in Romuald's full-length biography (a monograph to be discussed subsequently as contributing to yet another argument in Galdós).

aging parents consent to an arranged marriage. In a variant of this conflict, Benina will try to resolve financial problems pragmatically yet, out of a sense of duty, will cater to the whims of her insolvent bourgeois mistress. At the turning points of each story, the two figures will become less reconcilable. While St. Rita will have remained at the mercy of her original obligations (e.g., she would wait out the span of a bad marriage before entering the convent), Benina will distance herself from Madrid, acting out a role less and less circumscribed. And while Rita, moreover, once free of one patriarchal internment would seek to intern herself in another, a cloistered nunnery, Benina at the novel's end will not be re-circumscribed in any institutional space (e.g., the municipal poorhouse).

Where the traditional narrative of the cloistered martyr-saint Rita fails to account for Benina's own changes of narrative path, that of the wandering hermit-monk will begin to shed more light on it. The prefiguration of the male saint fits the observed details much better. Benina's story, like Romuald's, will be shaped by a dysfunctional moral code within an upper class culture--one that, in the case of the young saint, might disguise homicide for honor and, in that of Galdós's protagonist, will make charitable benevolence a dishonor. While Romuald will reject the sins of his class fairly soon, Benina will seem bound to an abusive system, financially supporting her bourgeois employer, rather than converting her. What would have in other frameworks seemed like charity, for example, Benina's lodging the washed up aristocrat Ponte, will now seem like thoughtless collaboration. For this reason, Almudena, communicating through amorous gestures, will fly into a jealous rage over the old woman's favoritism of the "galán bunito" ["pretty gentleman"]. And only when obligated by her Moorish lover to reroute to the declassed setting of las Cambroneras--breaking from Paca and her lazy consorts--will Benina attempt to again to adopt this new saint's model as repenting a past life. Thereafter, her attempts to shelter Almudena, first at the house of the Christians and later

at the house of her employer (still unsuccessful here), will be implicated as gestures toward the sheltering Romuald, in the way the saint would house communities of spiritual brothers or monastics.

Appearing to readers through the lens of saints' lives, more like a Romuald then a Rita now, Benina will continue her transformation as this saint in ways in which the saint's original name-bearer in the novel, Don Romualdo, will fail to develop--Galdós builds a more complex logic of reading saints lives into these passages, not just a simple analogy. In the priest's story, recall, "Cedrón" had pointed to the priest's non-fulfillment of the St. Romuald analogy but, moreover, had prefigured a martyr's crossing into new life. As I have already implied, the abrupt physical disappearance of Don Romualdo from the narrative would likely implicate this martyrdom to readers, at least as first. But the priest will not be reborn, as it were. His disappearance will rather function to clear a kind of symbolic space, making "Romuald" (a signified without signifier) now more available to Benina. As this protagonist will make her way across the Manzanares, in the direction of Toledo, she will seemingly have fulfilled a prophecy, especially as the Spanish topography here would recall a crossing of the Kidron into Almudena's Jerusalem (the inference here will be an ethno-religious syncreticism, which I will address in the subsequent section). Moreover, by moving into the little hut with Almudena, what in the context of the Romuald story would be a hermitage, she will at last adopt the persona of a Romuald in having symbolically reclaimed to a degree the saint's own work.

The Romualdo material, then, is revealed here to be part and parcel of the narrative's backbone structure, as Benina moves outward in her purported miracles on the real spiritual journey represented in the narrative. Through these scenes, even as the previous vision of her as one saint--and how saints' lives are to be read--will come into question, the protagonist will be re-envisioned as another. While the analogies of Benina

as St. Rita and Don Romualdo as St. Romuald would pose their own sets of representational problems for a Catholic readership, the same problems of orthodoxy, in this sense, would not arise if one would take Benina herself as a St. Romuald, a new ascetic pilgrim. As part of the strategy of this new figuration, the protagonist will come to realize a fuller potential as this adopted saintly persona, ever moving toward what Romuald's vision of Catholicism could mean within the context of a contemporaneous Spain.

The Poorhouse and the Hut as Opposing Visions within a Socio-Political Allegory

Where the discussion thus far has reconsidered Benina in relation to a previously untapped set of religious values in the narrative, it is also straightforward to explore the implications of this symbolism as more meaningful within the text's precise historical moment. The key to this argument, the threads of which I have revealed piecemeal up to this point, will resolve in a final figuration of St. Romuald as he would have appeared agelessly to Catholics: a religious reformer. By this representation, I believe, Galdós both creates an ideological dialogue with his symbolic distracter Don Romualdo and, moreover, develops Benina, now more viably as his St. Romuald, in a movement away from Romualdo in his bourgeois mode and into an older, more encompassing one. By exposing this opposition, I can reject the typical, prevalent reading of Misericordia as the innocuously good religious novel that criticism has traditionally claimed for it. If indeed these religious figures are built into the novel in this way, it must be seen otherwise, as claiming a larger agenda as critiquing Spain's socio-political status quo and making a tangible recommendation for reform.

The simple traditional image of the wandering monk (before Galdós's Benina would recast it as a role referencing St. Romuald in a more sophisticated way) would

have been a very politically charged one as specific to a contemporaneous Spain that, since the rise of liberalism, had been passionately roused by the very existence of the religious orders. Liberalizing the absolutist system of the Old Regime in Spain meant dismantling two hierarchical structures the absolutist state and the Catholic church (which in Spain had survived the Reformation).[248] Napoleon Bonaparte's pretensions of conquering Europe would pose a first threat to the secular regime in 1808. Taking the reigning Bourbon king Fernando VII captive, the French general would in that year install his brother Joseph on the throne. Met with protest in Spain, Bonaparte's revolutionary gesture would nevertheless have created the break in its traditional dynastic structure that would see the manifestations of a more authentically Spanish liberalism, namely, in the meeting of the Cortes at Cadiz and in the liberal constitution of 1812. Even after the first restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1814, the absolutist state would nevertheless answer to pressures from a liberal legacy, now rooted in the party system.

Cycling through post-Napoleonic periods of annulment and recognition, a struggling Old Regime in Spain would further be wracked by liberal ecclesiastical reform, much of it centering on the church as land owning and on its religious orders. It was through its landed orders that the church had grown into a strong hierarchized entity within the feudal system. From the tenth century onward, French Cluny had become the most successfully adapted to this system, amassing through land endowments a vast and self-sufficient system of monasteries. Beginning in the 1830s, however, liberal pressures on María Cristina, queen regent for Fernando's daughter Isabel II, would force state concessions, namely, the confiscation and sale of church land and the disbanding of the

[248] For the subsequent overview of the historical period, I consulted sections from the following standard histories: Spain: A Companion to Spanish Studies 159-70; Payne, A History of Spain and Portugal 453-512; Callahan, The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875-1998 1-40, 169-239; and Callahan "Church and State, 1800-1874," Spanish History Since 1808, ed. José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (New York: Oxford UP, 2000) 48-63.

orders. In this same period, highly politicized urban crowds in Madrid and Barcelona would play out the liberal passion of this kind of legislation in brutal acts of rioting against the clergy, monks among them (Callahan, The Catholic Church in Spain 7, 13). The monk, then, a specific time-bound image of a hierarchized church, would by this gesture have become a scapegoat for the church. Whether he would leave his land of his own accord or be removed from it, the image of the monk as de-landed would come to epitomize liberal advancement for nineteenth-century Spain.

Under what would become the longest period of liberal suppression or the Bourbon Restoration (from 1875 on), a land-depleted and depopulated church would now work at reviving itself, with the monastic again toeing traditional lines about its popular image. Dependent on a (constitutional) monarchy over which it no longer had jurisdiction, this church would seek alliances with social and political elites as a means of self-preservation. Individual religious orders, re-instated, would for their part cooperate and thrive by running state-sponsored asylums and poorhouses and by teaching within an educational system that had been given over as a governmental concession. Yet as official state charities tended to be vastly under-funded, sincere and disingenuous efforts alike would fail to recreate the charitable persona of the more moneyed and landed church of the Old Regime. And the poor, notably, that had once been seen as being close to God would now be threatened with being removed from society under the pretense of a new kind of secular-driven compassion, an act of social purification with the poorhouse as its vehicle (Callahan, The Catholic Church in Spain 230-31). Within this new kind of outreach, it would be the orders, most visible in industrial city life, that were the most easily vilified. They were suspected of furthering their own cause in educating only a select demographic and of amassing great fortunes in secular industry--the latter of which may or may not have actually been the case (Callahan, The Catholic Church in Spain

222, 228). The so-called church revival in this period, while not reaching its hand further than the upper classes to which it catered, would have marked the de-landed and industrialized monk now as decadent. Galdós would have directed his rewrite of this figure, and of the political vision that circumscribed it, toward this same reading or leisure class.

From the heated socio-political debates of the century to the Galdós page, the wandering or de-landed monk and thus potentially contemptible figure for a contemporaneous readership would have been opposed in the novel by the figuration of Benina as the saintly monk Romuald--still a wandering or journeying figure, but of another century and representing the strengths from another system of idealism. Historically located in the tenth century when papacy and church were not tied together as a strong bureaucratic institution, Romuald, notably, a Clunaic monastic, was a figure whose history grapples with these two entities growing toward that stature and jurisdiction under Gregorian reform (which would reach a height in the twelfth century).[249] Unlike his contemporaries, Romuald's crusade would be against a monastic system that may have well seemed to him to have lost the spirit of St. Benedict's ideals of brotherhood, which had been taken as a model for the Benedictines as early as the sixth

[249] For St. Romuald's period and context for his church reforms, I draw from the following sources: M. D. Knowles, "Church, History of, II (Medieval)," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 8 May 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; Lutz Kaelber's "Monasticism: Christian Monasticism," Encyclopedia of Religion, 2005, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 8 May 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; A. Donahue, "Hermits," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 8 May 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; R. Gregoire, "Cluniac Reform," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 15 May 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; Michel Parisse, "Gregorian reform," Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, 2001, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 15 May 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/pub/views/home.html>; and Henrietta Leyser, Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe 1000-1150 (New York: St. Martin's, 1984) (for the latter, particularly, 1-37).

century. He hoped to remind his spiritual brothers (and sisters) of the original ethics on which their community was founded and to embody that spirit himself in this very form of a charitably active and charismatic kind of religious or one becoming re-defined as such or reformed in his century within a "New Monasticism."

Galdós's use of this patron saint in his text would then seem highly strategic. Preaching the ideals of a kind of pre-hierarchized community or brotherhood, Benina-St. Romuald would have appeared to address the model both of recent past and present regimes and socio-political ideologies: both the restored (constitutional) monarchy, which the church was playing to in a self-interested way, and to a radical liberal individualism (i.e., the First Republic verged on anarchy) that had failed to recreate the Old Regime as an authentically co-operative or democratic system (i.e., elections were managed under Cánovas's "turno político"). Moreover, at this contemporaneous moment, new social movements such as anarchism and socialism would have seen both constitution and church as allies in enforcing an oppressive political and social system (Callahan, "Church and State," Spanish History Since 1808 63). In this light, Galdós may define a vision of a new society not only as less bourgeois-liberal and but also as more shared or collective, if not socialist, in character.

If implicated as such, though, where was Galdós to have found a religious content from which to borrow and adapt a rhetoric of renewed brotherhood, with respect to its subtle secular and religious polemic? He could have relied here on yet another familiar source for Romuald's life and times, the extended monograph Vita Romualdi or Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna of eleventh-century Benedictine St. Peter Damian.[250] Writing

[250] Biographical data here on Peter Damian is taken from both J. Joseph Ryan, "Damian, Peter" Encyclopedia of Religion, 2005, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 8 May 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/> and from O. J. Blum's "Peter Damian, St.," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 8 May 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

fifteen years after Romuald's death, Damian saw the saint's spiritual legacy as becoming forgotten within the Church and thus would compose the Life as formally edificatory or as a liturgical text.[251] With a general reproach of the absence of communal forms for honoring the saint, he would reason in his prologue that "[t]o have had such a thing readily available for recitation in church would have helped to satisfy the devout piety of the faithful and have been a general benefit" (Leyser, "Peter Damian, Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna," Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology 297). Assuming this burden, Damian would draw from oral sources to create yet another oral form. The text would script, essentially, the manner in which a Catholic might, on the saint's feast day, memorialize each segment of his life. Appropriate to the very public life as a part of Catholic worship that the text would take, it would also come with moralizing attached.[252] Relying thus on the material's traditional recurrence for a Catholic--that which an uninitiated reader would have to reconstruct otherwise--Galdós for his part would have clearly chosen to structure the trajectory of his Benina for a readership that would already have been familiar with the lesson of Romuald's life.[253]

Insights on Damian's account of Romuald as reformer were drawn from Colin Phipps, "Romuald--Model Hermit: Eremitical Theory in Saint Peter Damian's Vita Beati Romualdi, Chapters 16-27," Studies in Church History 22 (1985): 65-77 and introductory comments on translations of the original monograph, such as, in Thomas Matus, Peter Damian, and Bruno of Quefurt, The Mystery of Romuald and the Five Brothers: Stories from the Benedictines and Camaldolese (Trabuco Canyon, CA: Source, 1994) 165-69 and in, namely, Henrietta Leyser, "Peter Damian, Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna," Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology, Ed. Thomas Head (New York, Routledge, 2001) 295-316. For a version of the Life, I rely on the Leyser translation.

[251] Not specific to Damian's work, this liturgical form was one of three early genres of non-critical or more popular hagiography, before collected works, such as the Golden Legend, became more common (Halkin, "Hagiography," New Catholic Encyclopedia).

[252] As Matus, a modern New Camaldoli monk and translator of Damian, gives some idea of how the text would have assumed this public space:

> Peter Damian gives us his Life of Romuald as a liturgical text, a book to be read in church, from the pulpit, as instruction for the faithful who come to the saint's tomb for his yearly feast. The book was not meant to remain on the hand-lettered page but to sound out during the celebration of the Divine Office, at the vigil Hour of the Readings, adorned by Psalms. (168)

[253] A simple or very condensed example of testament in public worship to Romuald as reformist and spiritual guide, perhaps a legacy of Damian's depiction of him as such, may also be seen in a representative

While the physical text of Romuald's life would have had a dynamic public dimension, Romuald would also be portrayed himself by Damian as a hermit-monk characteristically less marginal and more public than what one might assume. The saint operated among loose bands of followers who were charitable, self-abnegating, and nomadic. In this way, he would negate both the differences between the solitary nomadic hermit and stronger community groupings of monks or nuns (differences which would come later) and would presage the formation of more active wandering charitable orders (e.g., the Franciscan "hermits" and, later, "friars" under Francis of Assisi). Clarifying this tradition, historian Henrietta Leyser notes that hermits such as Romuald would have acted outwardly or actively, trying "to reform the world, to become wandering preachers, to take upon themselves the care of lepers, prostitutes, the sick and the poor, to proclaim by word and deed that most ecclesiastical institutions were at worst rotten, at best inadequate" (Hermits and the New Monasticism 1). As a saint's life retold episodically as good or charitable deeds (N.B., not as miracle stories), individual installments like the punishment of the monks at Bagno, the repentance of the hermit Venerius, and the penance and mortification undertaken by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III, all will become representative examples of how the figure of Romuald was used as this kind of church reformer.[254] Here lie both the common problems of lay and religious community

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example of a prayer: "Father, through Saint Romuald you renewed the life of solitude and prayer in your Church. By our self-denial as we follow Christ bring us the joy of heaven. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, for ever and ever" (a link from Jones, "St. Romuald," Patron Saints Index).

[254] My selection of episodes here reflects Leyser's schematization of how Romuald would have commonly functioned in community, preaching to "those in the orders about the importance of the common life, to clerks and bishops about the heresy of simony, to hermits about the need for obedience to a superior of a rule" (Hermits and the New Monasticism 30). The interpretation of these episodes in my subsequent text also relies on Leyser's guide presented as follows (although many of the more discrete insights appearing otherwise are my own):

> In Romuald, Peter Damian could see and doubtless to some extent create a figure of great charismatic force fearlessly and relentlessly contesting conventional standards of morality while at the same time demanding that the greatest respect be paid to ordered lives. No one in Damian's Life is disobedient and gets away with it. There is no room for the self-styled hermit who all too easily might turn heretic.

members (needing to be counseled in better and more responsible brotherly relations) and the saint's consistent solution staged as a series of decisions or lessons lying somewhere on his continuum of monastery to hermitage.

A first such lesson that was commonly drawn from this material characterizes brotherhood, present and future. Having traveled to a town identified with the modern Bagno di Romagna (in the region of Forlì) in northern Italy to found a monastery, Romuald will receive during this stay a charitable contribution from a nobleman of the region. Instead of passing on the funds to this newest endeavor, he will dispense a large part of them to yet another monastery that had burned down (holding the rest to be likewise distributed). Perceiving this charitable distribution as an injustice, the monks at Bagno will react rashly:

> . . . They therefore plotted together, broke into his cell with sticks and staves, beat him many times and having stolen everything chased him ignominiously out of the region . . . Romuald went on his way plunged into deep depression, thinking to himself that never again would he worry about the salvation of anyone else but himself. But soon as he decided this he was overcome with fear that if this was really how he chose to act in future [sic] then undoubtedly he would perish, damned by divine judgment. The monks on the other hand . . . [would meet with calamity]. One . . . who had been particularly cruel to the most blessed soldier of Christ . . . crossed the River Savio, stumbled on the bridge and was suddenly thrown from it . . . [and died]. Moreover, that night . . . there was a huge snowfall, so heavy that roof of the monk's dormitory came crashing down over them, breaking skulls, arms, legs, and all manner of limbs. One man had an eye torn out and lost part of his vision--deservedly so, for divided from his neighbor he had already lost one of the lights of twofold charity, even if he kept the other. (Leyser, "Peter Damian, Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna," Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology 301-22)

At the same time, there is no place for the sinner to hide however grand his worldly status. Rulers are expected to do what holy men tell them. This is not a world that in any way exalts the lay power. There is not attempt here to create a new secular ethic. On the contrary the plan is to monasticize the world--to turn it all, indeed--and they are Damian's words as he describes the activities of Romuald "into a hermitage" (Leyser, "Peter Damian, Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna," Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology 295-6).

The monks here would seem to represent the status quo of a community that Romuald will attempt to reform; and the saint himself as hermit here, engaged in the struggle to overcome such stagnation. The episode makes the same assumption for each, that is, when tested at its most characteristic weakness, the ills and strengths of each community will surface. And so they do. That is, the monks, idealistically bound by communal ties, will be provoked into making a brotherly assault--showing the true spirit of this community as being less than authentically Christian. Acting, moreover, without repent, they will all suffer at the hand of divine justice. Losing an eye, the one will represent the failure to uphold the "lights of twofold charity," the language of one of the most basic rules of the Christian faith or the "Golden Rule" that prescribes love of both God and neighbor (Phipps 70-72). The hermit, typically solitary, will nonetheless behave better in this instance: engaging in own struggle for love toward his brother, he will overcome his doubts. Thus will be Romuald's new religious creature, so to speak, simultaneously both hermit and monk, both solitary and brotherly, and as such the aspiration toward a new communal ideal. Such a story easily parallels the kinds of reform proceeding in Galdós's Spain.

A second lesson constitutes a warning against radical egotism or individualism. In further travels, Romuald will come upon a hermit Venerius who has abandoned the evils of his own community and taken up the solitary life. Yet, as a less successful version of the saint himself, this hermit will be revealed as what Leyser describes as "self-styled" or one who follows no organizing principle other than his own fancy:

> To this Romuald replied: "If you carry the Cross of Christ it is essential that you do not forsake Christ's obedience. Go therefore and once you have obtained the permission of your abbot you may return and live here under this jurisdiction in a spirit of humility. And so the edifice of good works your noble intentions is building will become taller through humility and be beautified by the virtue of obedience." By offering this advice and much more besides Romuald taught

> Venerius how to contend against mental temptations and how to repel the threats of evil spirits. He then cheerfully took his leave of a man now strengthened and enlightened in many ways. (Leyser, Henrietta. "Peter Damian, Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna." Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology 303)

Tested in his greatest weakness, Venerius must resist the temptation of autonomy, a threat otherwise vis-à-vis the greater religious community. It will be the enlightened hermit who will roam yet still act obediently before this community, which in this scenario is Christ's and not necessarily that of a hierarchical church (Romuald roamed and Damian chronicled him before the centralization of the church). This vision would be most practically achieved, following the model that Romuald himself has set, by abstention from radical individuality. Thus will he advise his brother here to both obtain the permission of the local abbot to live apart and to live within a rule--which for hermits of this period was more of an "embodiment of ideals" than a concession to forms (Leyser, Hermits and the New Monasticism 3).

And a third lesson addresses individual culpability before God as equalizing among brothers. The episode is recounted as one of the saint's many interactions with Otto III, Holy Roman Emperor (996-1002). Otto was also one of a line of emperors for whom the papacy under the feudal system would have been converted into a source of revenue (Knowles, "Church, History of, II (Medieval)," New Catholic Encyclopedia). Less interested here in the issue of papal supremacy (which would only later become relevant, as seen historically), the wandering deliverer of discipline will otherwise impress on the emperor his penance for a crime reminiscent of King David's. Here again a sovereign would plot the death of an enemy (in this case, the Roman senator Crescentius) and take that enemy's widow as his concubine:

> . . . The aforesaid emperor was indeed a great patron of the monastic order and showed much devotion to the servants of God. Himself shriven by the holy man for the crime concerning Crescentius he made a barefooted pilgrimage as penance

> setting out from the city of Rome and going as far as the church of San Michele on Monte Gargano. For the whole of Lent he stayed with a few companions at San Apollinaire in Classe. There he dedicated himself so far as his strength allowed to fasting and psalmody; next to his skin he wore a hair shirt over which was a covering of gold and purple. His bed was made with shimmering coverlets but in fact he lay on a mat made of reeds that rubbed and bruised his delicate limbs. He even promised Romuald that he would abdicate and become a monk and that he, to whom so many men were subject, would make himself answerable to Christ the poor man and begin anew as a debtor in the service of Christ. [And yet some episodes later, still refusing to keep his promise to abdicate, the emperor will die in combat.] (Leyser, "Peter Damian, Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna," Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology 303-4)

While in David's story the contemptuous sins of the ruling class would seem timeless and untoward, in Otto's as retold here, or in the ethics that Romuald pursues, that ruling class would become more conscious of its sins. It would be held to Christ's law by the very community that it trespassed against. Lying on his bed of reeds, the bed of a common monk, Otto within this system would not only have been admitting sin but also admitting the commonality of sin or that all sinners before God become humbled equals. A common theme in Romuald, the emperor's admittance will be among that of many a corrupt noble who the saint will seek to convert. Demanding of them each time to resign their position and join his ranks otherwise, "[a]nyone might have thought," Romuald's chronicler would observe, "that his plan was to turn the whole world into a hermitage and for everyone to become monks. As it was he snatched away many from the world, settling them in a great variety of holy places . . ." (Leyser, "Peter Damian, Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna," Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology 308). In the subtle distinction noted here, the saint would not seem to be reforming the secular world with the ethics of the religious one but, rather, to be re-creating the world as a religious one (Head 295-96)--and one, moreover, that would characteristically support a vast inclusiveness and ethical equalities.

At any one of these single moments in the life of the saint, the lesson of the liturgy--here clearly the measure of good brotherhood--would guide a Galdós reader through Misericordia, that is, as Galdós would be able to rely on such conventional meanings as reading habits in his audience, clear facts of cultural Catholicism that he could use at will and find understanding in many readers. Thus the modern narrative (as the medieval one) will demonstrate the ills of brotherhood, figured by many of the bourgeois characters and by Benina's dealings with them as a means of setting the premise for the better or reforming example. Reproducing the saint's own vocation of housing a flock on a lord's gifted fief, the novel's protagonist will first operate out of a bourgeois apartment in which she will house both Paca and, later, Ponte, both diminished in their rank, but "maintained" as opposed to "converted." Not unlike the saint, she will fund her efforts in this charitable establishment by accepting charity and redistributing it. For Romuald, however, the gesture will be marked be an ideal of charity, manageable only by the most selfless and judicious of figures, that is, by a saint, and not a lesson to be followed by all--his charity follows the heroic model preferred by the institutional church. By contrast, for Benina, it will become a system in which "help thyself" may be more liberally applied, where "borrowing" schemes justify action in a community network or pocketbook, as it were. Where the saint's system preserves a paternalistic element, then, Benina's functions as the more genuine co-operative spirit, even as it is potentially criminal from that paternalistic point of view.

Missing the essence of true Christian community as conceived of in the Romuald material, the novel's restored upper class will come to represent a status quo of brotherly relations as a socio-political model set against that which Galdós's Romuald now provides. In the case of Benina's boarders, in contrast, each member of that system, like the monks at Bagno, will be exposed for their greatest weaknesses to form a new ideal of

charity. The novelist's more populist and less orthodox message could not be clearer. While Paca would have succumbed to poverty without Benina and her network, Paca for her part will now succumb to the upwardly mobile seamstress Juliana, her daughter-in-law. When Benina returns to the apartment after her containment in the poorhouse, she will find that the co-operative system she had been attempting to put in place (in which the Paca had all but in name participated until that time) had been replaced by a hierarchical state, by a Juliana who had thus taken charge of a familiar class-marked system.[255] There will be literally no room in the house, that of the ruling class and its figureheads, for either the Old Regime ceremony which Ponte will reincarnate, or failed adaptations of bourgeois liberalism like Benina's capitalist variations. Thus Benina, as Juliana will explain to Doña Paca, emerges as a victim of the bourgeoisie: "[e]s muy buena, pero ya está muy caduca, mayormente, y no le sirve a usted para nada" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 288) ["{s}he's a good person but quite worn out, and no use to you any more" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 247}]. Trimming the fat of her system, Juliana will prompt her new mistress to oust first Ponte[256] and then Benina--the maid's association with more obvious marginal figures (the Moor who seems to have leprosy in the eyes of Juliana) further demoting her or suspending her rights to visit.

Paca's weakness may thus be defined a refusal of reciprocity--namely, in refusing to reinvest in "brothers" Benina and Almudena after the disbursement of the inheritance--, and so in the novelist's justice, she will end by being excluded, through the retribution of

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[255] The qualifying of her figure as authoritarian, a sovereign gifted in household management, will be made by the protagonist now observing, "'[e]sta es la que ahora manda. Bien se conoce el despotismo'" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 296) ["'{t}his is the one who wears the trousers here, and a right despot she is too'" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 256}].

[256] The ousted Ponte, for his part, will at first seem to embrace his old cohorts, accompanying the clan who would set out to recoup or free Benina and Almudena from the poorhouse. But later it will become clear that he still fancies himself a member of an older system, where a question of honor will turn him against Almudena, his spiritual brother (a system of honor that St. Romuald, on the other hand, would outrightly reject).

a kind of divine justice, from the general good that might have come of interconnectedness with a new spiritual (and economic) community. This justice is implied by the novel's final scene, as expressed through her ailing daughter-in-law.[257] Last left in the dry roost of modest bourgeois wealth that she has recreated, it is Juliana who will now suffer from ailments or neuroses (insomnia, lack of appetite, concern for her children's health, etc.), which she will seek to resolve by seeking out Benina. First repaying the maid her owed back wages, Juliana will later re-qualify or confess herself to Benina as having sinned--a confession about the system she functions in, not only herself. Her only cure, she further explains, would be to have the maid's own reassurance that her children will continue to be well. Acting as did Romuald toward a repenting Otto in this scene, Benina will not fail to lend this comfort to the matriarch. But she nevertheless will refuse Juliana's grateful response declaring her to be a saint: "Yo no soy santa. Pero tus niños están buenos y no padecen ningún mal . . . No llores . . . y ahora vete a tu casa, y no vuelvas a pecar" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 318) ["I'm no saint. But your children are well and have nothing wrong with them. Stop crying. Now go home and sin no more" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. De Salis: 280}]. With a corollary "yo no soy santa" that once denied Benina's identification with St. Rita, the novelist now revises her similarity to Romuald, much in the style of the Damian narrative: that is, by refusing his miracles for his good deeds, and Benina's saintliness for her role as good religious or the good priest.[258]

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[257] In the case of Ponte, defending his honor while he should have been begging with his "angel," he will simply be expendable. He will first fall from his poetically high place, by literally falling from a horse (a reminiscence of Don Quixote) and then again later down the stairs of Paca's apartment, his life ending with a gruesome collapse and paralysis.

[258] Here it should be clarified that Benina responds in the manner of a spiritual guide or confessor like St. Romuald, rather than a miracle-worker. Likewise, there is no miracle, healing, performed here as elsewhere in St. Rita.

While the bourgeois sovereign head of household in this tale repents at the doorstep of the narrative's more authentic Romuald, it will be the priest Don Romualdo, in another gesture of open but uncommentaried cultural context for the saint, who comes to represent another counterpoint to good brotherhood, although now of the church towards its poor. This critique will become apparent again in the very scene in which Romualdo appears as foregrounded. Here, recall, he discloses to Doña Paca that he acts as proprietor of an "asilo," a poorhouse or asylum, notably called "la Misericordia."[259] In his subsequent commentary, he will describe contemporaneous Spain, because of its rampant population of homeless and destitute, as a kind of poorhouse of limitless proportion: "'Podríamos creer,'" añadió, "'que es nuestro país inmensa gusanera de pobres, y que debemos hacer de la nación un Asilo sin fin, donde quepamos todos, desde el primero al último. Al paso que vamos, pronto seremos el más grande Hospicio de Europa . . . .'" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 269) ["One might think that our country was nothing but a seething mass of poor people and that the nation should be turned into one vast asylum, where there is room for all of us, from the first to the last" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 226}]. Traditionally argued in criticism to be a poignant observation of a more or less benign institutional figure, the historical Romuald material or cultural back story allows us to read this moment otherwise, as detracting from his purported goodness. The priest's vision of "all the world a poorhouse," a pitiable statement for any reader, would recall for a Catholic an inherent counterpoint to the historical saint's "all the world a hermitage." And, thus, the priest himself will ideologically take ownership, be it with empathy or apathy, of a failing system, without seeing the kind of alternatives that the un-institutional Benina had.

[259] As has been noted by García Lorenzo, this name recalls the contemporaneous Madrid poorhouse "El Asilo" or "Casa de Misericordia de Santa Isabel" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 252, fn. 422).

Obfuscating but not exonerating the priest in this association will be his infrequent appearances in the narrative. Yet, while a kind of community chorus will take up his poorhouse refrain in a sub-plot that even contains hermits, Don Romualdo will grow steadily into a more menacing ideological presence, guarding a persistent legacy but never a solution. Beginning with Silvero, the luckless peasant, the priest is named specifically as holding the key to salvation in his sponsorship, the power necessary to secure the granddaughters of this peasant entrance into a poorhouse (a charity that, like the priest, nevertheless remains suspended). Thereafter, the Christian couple that gives temporary asylum to Almudena will suggest that the two seek this same charity from Don Romualdo (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 248).

However, "salvation" in these terms will now be redefined: no longer will the poor man, here Almudena, prefer entry into Romualdo's poorhouse but now rather will choose freedom from its "cómoda sujeción" ["comfortable servitude"].[260] Once meeting the young priest outside Romualdo's church, it will already be too late for that choice for Benina herself. He will explain to Benina that he has already interceded with Don Romualdo on her behalf and that the (elusive) priest has promised to help (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 252). In the very next scene, as a kind of artificial help from one state mechanism or another, Benina's arrest (for illegal begging) will result in both their internments. As they are moved through two of Madrid's most infamous poorhouses, they will emerge seeming as if they had been held in a municipal "mazmorra" ["dungeon"].[261] When Juliana, the as yet unrepentant matriarch, again suggests that the

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[260] "Almudena . . . amaba la libertad y la prefería trabajosa y miserable a la cómoda sujeción del asilo." (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 248) ["Almudena . . . loved freedom and preferred it, however painful and wretched, to the comfortable servitude of an asylum" {Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, trans. de Salis: 204}].

[261] This moment in the text appears as follows: "En lastimoso estado iban los dos: Benina descalza, desgarrada y sucia la negra ropa; el moro envejecido, la cara verde y macilenta; uno y otro revelando en sus demacrados rostros el hambre que habían padecido, la opresión y tristeza del forzado encierro en lo que

two seek Don Romualdo's sponsorship to enter a poorhouse (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 299), the absent priest, a bourgeois mouthpiece now, will appear to be acting in collusion with a secular status quo.

Galdós's subtle plays on a cultural precedent thus reveal the priest as antagonistic, and so his image points to a very precise socio-cultural critique about the church and its clergy, contemporaneous with the novelist. In this critique, Romualdo proves himself either absent or powerless. Recall that his first appearance was as a pretense, in Benina's fiction of her charitable employer. Likewise, the materialized Cedrón implies how the mark set by the traditional cultural vision of a St. Romuald has been missed. While this Cedrón will support a needy bourgeoisie, he will nevertheless be acting as the charitable hand of the secular institution, failing to become a spiritual guide for the group. For the impoverished community beyond that scope, he offers only a more limited charity, fulfilled only in the vague promise of salvation by entering his poorhouse. It is, then, as Misericordia's priest is portrayed as a sketchy, inconsistent, or questionable character that he would have reflected a real set of problems specific to the church as a limited charitable entity under Spain's restored monarchy. As a church acting in collusion with the upper classes, its clergy--parish priests particularly--were notorious for being poorly trained, self-interested, and complacently absent from their role as local aids (Callahan, The Catholic Church in Spain 211). While Benina would not have elicited the same criticism, when the figure is recast as a hermit-monk of a different era, this alternate Romualdo loses her guise as a kind of Cluniac needing to be held in check by hermits.

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más parece mazmorra que hospicio" (Pérez Galdós, Misericordia, 1982: 294). In her socio-cultural reading of Misericordia that underscores the thematic of homelessness, Gold will point to the novel's documentation of contemporaneous historical perspectives that would label a class of "new urban nomads" as social contaminates and, moreover, "a penal code that treated vagrants as criminals" to be managed within structures such as prisons, shelters, hospitals, asylums, workhouses. She finds the moment that I recall above to be the novel's boldest gesture at characterizing the poorhouse as public chastisement ("Outsider Art: Homelessness in Misericordia," Anales Galdosianos 143, 147, 149).

In reformist gestures reminiscent of her saint, Benina will nonetheless take this decadent church-and-state mechanism to task, first, by attempting to operate within its own structure and, then, by re-engineering it. This former objective is signaled by Benina's early collusion with the bourgeoisie. Yet once her physical narrative will begin to shift milieu (first city to suburbs, then to suburbs more permanently), so too will her role as a reformer begin to evolve--characteristic of Romuald's movement from Benedictine monastery to his own monastery-hermitage. Beginning her journey away from the city, Benina will begin to operate apart from the limitations of the charitable local priest Romualdo (likely representing a common denominator of priests of her day), attempting to take care of the slum inhabitants, as the priest does not. In a simultaneous city narrative, Romualdo will begin to make his appearance in Benina's old haunts, namely Paca's apartment, thus taking care of the maid's original flock (and, later, of her and Almudena in a different way). By the end of the third moment away, however, when her attempt to counter a system that creates dependencies rather than teach "help thyself" will fail, Benina's initial vision of the charitable priest will seem too narrowly conceived to continue to serve her purpose. In this way, the very same shift of milieu that distinguishes Benina and Don Romualdo as cultural signifiers will also distinguish them ideologically.

In the course of her exodus from Madrid, Benina will come to reject, such as Romuald would, the stale cultural scripts, social or religious, that limit her and embrace instead the formation of a new union or brotherhood. In a more negative sense, Juliana's bourgeois house would also re-define class boundaries, setting its exclusions, and Don Romualdo's poorhouse would combine religious and municipal charity in new forms of such exclusion, as the poor are removed from the city streets. This "new" regime is, however, already in revision by Benina, who focuses her new charitable efforts on

Almudena, who I have reclaimed as a marginal for contemporaneous Spain already being remade by Galdós as the Virgin or central in its history. Her choice will be borne out in the narrative, as recouping her companion, a connection first made by the blind beggar's wily romantic manipulations, will turn into an active choice. At Paca's doorstep, Benina accepts a complete severance of her relations with the bourgeois (denying her even visiting rights) in deference to her continued rapport with the leprous Almudena, now part of her spiritual family. This final shift in social vision will at last be signaled by her retracing her steps back out of Madrid and across the Toledo bridge into the suburbs. Where Benina and Almudena will head together, led by the path of Romuald's pilgrimage (although recreating it), they will define as a vision of more a fluid and common habitation.

Moving away to their hut at the novel's end, Benina and Almudena will continue to reform Spain's social order in terms of a true religion outside of society and outside Church parishes. The presence of Almudena will lend the community its pluralist quality--more than even St. Romuald had envisioned--where diverse ethno-religious elements of Spain's history may combine, recalled in the inclusive term "Jerusalem." Not meant to imply Jerusalem in any literal sense (certainly, the two will not travel that far), the place name will become, as any of the religious signifiers in this tale, a recognizable biblical image or symbol of a (Catholic) cultural idea or expression--a proverbial New Jerusalem. In this case, that promise may well include references to the historical Jewish citadel in the Promised Land, as suggested in Schyfter, but it certainly would not have been limited to that identity, given that it contains the image of a savior, the endpoint of a pilgrimage and a point of rebirth for a Christian community as well.

The breadth of the syncretic gesture here will become even more evident or readable as Galdós restates or reframe it in terms of Spanish topography, that is, as

"Toledo"--referenced in the narrative as both the bridge crossed and the road on which the hermitage will eventually be founded. Again a point of a historical-religious layering in terms of its centrality to the Moorish conquest and the Christian re-conquest of it as the Muslim empire's last vestige, Toledo would have also been a city thereafter bearing the marks of that layering--unlike Madrid, Toledo would retain its own historic synagogues and mosque.[262] Unlike St. Romuald's pilgrimage, then, Benina and Almudena's would imply more than just Catholic inclusiveness--a creed certainly radical in light of the century's restored church that had just come through legislation of religious tolerance under the First Republic (1873-74).

It will not be the community's radicalism in creed that characterizes its reform (its most radical departure from a contemporaneous Spain and from St. Romuald). I believe that final gesture of reform can also be drawn out of another subtlety from the Catholic imaginary, another borrowing from the St. Romuald material, recreated in Benina's act of taking alms. As part of the novel's final sequence, Benina accepts her missed wages from Juliana and will explain that she had not come to collect them earlier--not out of pride--but because she had been receiving hand-outs at Don Romualdo's church. Here, Benina alludes to the parable of the self-styled hermit who, by following Romuald's rule, would learn to live separately, but also harmoniously, vis-à-vis the greater religious community. A more salient example of this principle would be Romuald's own hybrid lifestyle as hermit-monk, converting the aristocracy by bartering with it. Galdós's hermit, for her part, would by accepting alms not only have ensured her subsistence but, moreover, have secured the existence of her new community in a non-threatening way. Lying outside the

[262] In terms of its history of syncretism, Toledo is projected here as a better place than Madrid. Even in terms of a later nineteenth-century perspective, this qualification would have been insinuated, given that the formation of the Diocese of Madrid-Alcalà had essentially robbed from that of Toledo. All these qualifiers of a Toledo of the age were found in Condé de Cedillo, "Toledo," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1912, New Advent, 5 July 2008 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14755a.htm>.

vision of the city bourgeoisie, on the road between a Catholic and a more syncretic Spain, she would not so much have been living in exile[263] or in the isolating radicalism of an anarchic body. Instead, she can act as a potential reformer, almost in socialist terms, remaining demystified and accessible, ever becoming a familiar feature of the (mainstream) landscape.

A New Realist Reading of Misericordia

The cultural references I have traced here, like those in the prior chapters, all are specific to Catholic Spain of the time. By recalling them, Galdós is able to engage his readers in contemporaneous church-and-state polemics, in a voice that even the more conservative would understand. He recalls Spain's marginalized ethno-religious history through the iconography of its virgin. He questions the role of the church by dialoging theologically with the developing church history of St. Rita. And he suggests the need for social reform by recalling the life of St. Romuald, a good monk-hermit and a reformer of the monastic system. All of these critiques tie together at the novel's end: Benina and Almudena will live together in a hut or a version of a St. Romuald-style hermitage (although still accepting alms from Don Romualdo). As such an outcome retains certain ties to the mainstream, Galdós cannot be said to recommend anarchy. He does, however, envision a syncretic religious society beyond that proposed by the era's church or state.

Recuperating Almudena and Benina as social figures operating in a subtle way as realistic or Realist will allow important re-considerations of the novel's own critical

[263] Scholars have traditionally characterized the ending as a spiritual space, particularly as a transcendent one, more recently doubt has been place on that transcendence by looking at the novel in terms of contemporaneous cultural or socio-economic realties. For example, Mora García understands Benina as avoiding a direct challenge to the religious status quo (195), and Gold will further interpret this end as a diminished or unromantic state of exile ("Outsider Art: Homelessness in Misericordia," Anales Galdosianos 151).

standing, as having shed its image for critics as representing innocuous religious goodness and offering instead visions of a more secular and transgressive politics. Only by reclaiming these characters in contexts, often allegorical ones, which spoke to the novelist's contemporaneous Catholic readership, have new social dimensions and strategies for critique emerged. Almudena, as the Madrid Virgin, implicates Spain's ethno-religiously syncretic history, and Benina, as St. Romuald, challenges the Church's institutional inflexibility, decadence, and control by assuming the role of a new type of saint, almost socialist in inspiration. Notably, each of these re-representations has functioned with a switch of gender identifications in the source materials, where cross-dressing or gender confusion has further become a metaphor for transgression against social norms.

Working very much using all the variants of religious discourse that I defined in the introduction to this present study, Misericordia's secularized-religious discourse may be seen as dressing up religion to carry the secular will, using a consistent network of religious figures, symbols, metaphors, phraseology, etc. (figured outside the formal church structure) to tell a very realistic story of poverty and piety in Spain. Once decoded, the text's religious references add a level to the ways in which the individual reader might be brought to uncover and grapple with the day's social issues. This novel's prick of conscience, nonetheless, will be achieved by the subtle design of a thinly veiled ideological challenge to a contemporaneous status quo--radical but never offending, reformist but only through employment of the very tools that a traditional church history has provided him.

Despite the novel's extended socio-political work with saints' materials, Galdós still seems to many contemporary critics to subscribe to the status quo bourgeois liberalism of his day because the gesture of using this religious material would seem too

escapist, undefined, or intangible, to really be confrontational. After all, Benina, as José Luis Mora Garcia claims, runs away from the church rather than confronting it. But the hermitage at the novel's end, I counter, reconfigures Don Romualdo's church-run and state-sponsored poorhouse in many ways. This solution does lie far from the centers of existing power, but it is not purely utopian. Benina can ask the right questions from this location outside the city, as a kind of communal conscience: must non-Christians be excluded from national Spain, and is the present church, as a state mechanism, really taking care of its own? Galdós is suggesting that the abstracts associated with traditional religious transcendence should not guide ethical choices in a formalistic way, but rather that the religion of the community needs to be considered anew. After all, these poor misfits do find Jerusalem and Toledo, two new possible configurations of a (constitutional) monarchy and republic. There are no Marxist revolutionaries here, but there is a clear call for reform for the people in the street.

Considering the novel in this way allows one to evaluate Misericordia outside the canons of transcendence (aesthetic and theological) against which critics have judged it. The novel offers more than a kind of nostalgic or remorseful look at a decadent Spain, attempting to become a new good book preaching a kind of socialism that will align it with more viably with a secular ideology of progress.[264] As it does so, one need not immediately assume that by the kind of "gentle," healthy, or even purportedly Utopian anarchy practiced by his characters, Galdós, the traditional champion of liberalism, was implying that any then-extant form of religion (especially that outside the church proper)

[264] My impressions of this history of ideas--namely, the defining features of socialisms of the age--are taken mainly from the chapter "Ideology: Secular" in Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution 1789-1848 (New York: Vintage Books, 1996). Also I have found useful a more basic explanation of the ideologies of the age in a short section "Political Ideologies" (162-72) in Charles Breunig and Matthew Bernard Levinger, The Revolutionary Era, 1789-1850, The Norton History of Modern Europe (New York: Norton, 2002).

could in itself become a utopian socialism, if one simply evaded the same traditionalist ground of classical bourgeois liberalism.

As his vision shows what ought to be the "natural rights" to happiness of the laboring poor, the message of the novel can find its parallels in more socialist gestures, even represented without the traces of industrialism that would come later to Spain. It speaks in clear terms of the fundamental alienation of the individual within bourgeois society (the homeless quality of Benina and Almudena, which Hazel Gold[265] has pointed to), only to attempt to resolve that dilemma by challenging the self-interested liberal, vested in a still privileged form of representational government and ensconced in apartments it perhaps cannot afford. Thus the novel's self-declared, syncretic monks of ambiguous social and gender status reject the real historical and status-stratified church of the era, while affirming its particular literacies as ways to tell new stories about new communities. The image of Benina as hermit, moreover, could potentially reach even farther back into Church history, recalling a more primitive and classless existence of the sort long under discussion as the more primitive, Pauline Church that was an option before the era's Church centralized so aggressively around the papacy (a Petrine Church, the rock on which Church institutions were built.

The novel thus takes a look forward then by looking back and by speaking in a language of images that is a very much an older cultural dialect in Spain. The vision it presents will begin to look more like a kind of secular ideology expressing the author's commitment to the larger nineteenth-century's desire to modernize: it would shed liberalism's sense of progress for seemingly better images of real social change. Galdós builds into this vision representations of this inevitable crisis of the bourgeoisie, which

[265] Gold, "Outsider Art: Homelessness in Misericordia," Anales Galdosianos.

would have Juliana arriving at Benina's doorstep essentially seeking forgiveness for being a part of this upper class.

A commitment to aesthetic modernization has, overall, driven the critics' readings of Misericordia, leaving the novel to seem naïve, expressing a retreat to a moral liberalism that offers not reform but instead a rather gutless spiritualism in the midst of a secular crisis. My reading has opened out the possibility that the novel is considerably more daring, judged as based on strategies of cultural representation drawn from religious sources, assembled for an audience who could be presumed to be literate in the ephemera of Catholicism, including its sermons, major issues, saints' lives, and values, Remember, after all, misericordia connotes in religious terms the "Mercy of God" or the limitless compassion and forgiveness shown by the heavenly Father towards His faithful (even the repentant sinful). But a misericord is also the historical name for a medieval weapon. It is the short blade with which knights finished off dying components as a coup de grâce in an ultimate act of a kind of charity. What I have pointed to overall is not only the other or second meaning of this novel as more secular but also its inherent strategizing that would take what is rhetorically religious and re-apply that to its own purpose--thus a cutting blow might in this sense seem more like charity, but in the end a reader must recognize or re-read the charity in fact as more subversive gesture.

Galdós's Realism: An Answer to Modernity's Aestheticism and Rhetoric

Recalling the discussion of critical dialogues (and historical elisions) with which I began my discussion of the novel, I have suggested that Galdós's own program and Misericordia have taken parallel critical paths, interpreted as progressively more religious and abstract in its artistry. That is, they have each come to be considered more contemporary expressions of transcendent and Christian values (rather than simply

appearing as tendentiously anticlerical in a historical sense). Such approaches have satisfied a scholarship interested in recovering a creative genius Galdós--one more artistically concerned with asserting his creativity or Romantic fallacy and less with the genuine world around him. And the aesthetic program of this scholarship has also re-evaluated Misericordia itself as a national aesthetic gem and a religious masterpiece. As I read it, however, the novel has become Galdós's "good child" in a different way: it has made moralistic critique of the bourgeoisie and represented religion as an ideology of transcendence within the world. It has otherwise been undervalued in terms of it cultural-religious backgrounds and the commentary that it makes on organized religion and socio-cultural politics on a national level. Yet, now, one may see what Galdós may have meant in claiming his work as Realist and grounded in nineteenth-century Spain. He can no longer be rendered harmless the critic's artistic genius, but rather reveals himself here as a very clever artist weaving together several kinds of cultural resource for specific purposes. His art may thus be even greater than these critics have supposed, but also considerably more worldly-practical.

As I have already suggested, Misericordia's preface gives a first insight into the author's work as an intentional or verifiable realistic picture of his surroundings, a Spain that was culturally and politically Catholic in many ways. Here, as also intimated previously, I understand Galdós to be aligning himself with European Realism, but using a greater range of tools than earlier critics have surmised. Most candidly perhaps, in measuring Almudena's successful portrayal in terms of the verisimilitude perceived by his readership, Galdós can be seen in his preface adopting Realism's rhetoric: "De este modo adquirí ese tipo interesantísimo, que los lectores de Misericordia han encontrado tan real" (Pérez Galdós, "Prefacio del autor," Misericordia 7). If in this moment Galdós defines the criteria against which Almudena's success is to be measured in Realist terms,

then in the whole of the preface (largely a vignette on the character), he would appeal to an audience already won over by his skill, by revealing the meticulous documentation behind his craft--weaving Spanish materials of the most ordinary reality into a national and political allegory--not just a humanist, Christian, or aesthetic one.

Taking the preface as straightforwardly Realist, rather than as the elusive aesthetic gesture that scholarship has traditionally claimed it for, it also becomes possible to read Galdós's acknowledgement of success as a Realist as his counterchallenge to a contemporaneous Spanish aestheticism, that is, his critique of the direction that Spanish letters were taking in the era or of the emerging Modernist aesthetic. The historical parallel between the preface, published in 1913, and a series of articles entitled "la Generación de 1898," published earlier in the same year,[266] point to this possibility.

In this article series, Spanish novelist José Martínez Ruiz (1873-1967), known by the pseudonym Azorín, defines a common aesthetics for a literary vanguard of that name, with the landmark figures of Spanish authors Pío Baroja (1872-1956), Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867-1916), and Valle-Inclán. While subsequent scholarship has reconfigured this original conception of the group, for example, claiming certain figures more precisely as "modernistas,"[267] what Azorín conceived in 1913 was a literati characterized by a "disinterested, semi-Romantic idealism and their rebellious spirit of protest" (Shaw, The Generation of 1898 in Spain 3). This temperament, Azorín felt, would manifest itself in a new vision and spirit of criticism of Spanish socio-political reality and in a rejection of traditional Realist

[266] Galdós's preface is dated February 1913. In his The Generation of 1898 in Spain (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1975), Donald L. Shaw indicates that Azorín's essay appeared before March of that same year (2-4).
[267] Shaw offers a more standard grouping for the Generation of 1898 that, aside from Azorín, includes Ángel Gavinet, Miguel de Unamuno, Ramiro de Maeztu, Pío Baroja, and Antonio Machado. As for the Modernists, he points to the leading Latin American figure Rubén Darío as having influenced Antonio Machado, Juan Ramón Jimenez, and Ramón del Valle-Inclán earlier in their careers and Manuel Machado, a more enduring follower of Darío (The Generation of 1898 in Spain 5, 14-15).

formulas for an ultramodern set of foreign ideologies and aesthetics[268] (i.e., Latin American Modernists and, by association, French Parnassians[269]). Defined in this way, the new Generation would have consigned Galdós to a less relevant position, leaving his modernity ambiguous because of its indigenousness.

While Valle-Inclán attempted to acknowledge the national reputation of Galdós as garbancero or as representing and appealing to the Spanish populace, he still denied the political and social value of the populist writer, in no small part because of his deference to the contemporary or modern artistic relevance that he as part of this younger generation could claim. Galdós, in contrast, might be seen in his preface to Misericordia as making an earlier and timelier--certainly more historically coincidental--attempt at challenging Azorín's statements of aesthetics (and this challenge, moreover, is the key to the novel). Like his contemporary, Galdós may have been defining Realism's method and aesthetics to the end of cementing or embracing his identity as an engaged Spanish writer, not as the kind of internationalist-artist preferred by Azorín's conception of the Generation of 1898 and the Modernists.

The preface to Misericordia, as it creates and promotes the author's mystique as Realist-researcher-scientist, then may, by comparison, point to an evaluation of his rivals'

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[268] In the wake of Azorín's articulation (in 1913) of a collective aesthetics claiming to be socially analytical and cosmopolitan, Shaw finds Pedro Salinas (in 1935 and 1940) to have rearticulated a more accurate and contemporary distinction between Modernist aesthetics and that of the Generation of 1898--the one, respectively, a renovation of poetics and poetic expression and the other, rather, a less formalistic devotion to the regeneration of Spanish conscience, spirituality, and of philosophical truth. However, the critic continues by revising Salinas, emphasizing the Generation's personal search for a purposeful philosophy, applied to a national cause that, Shaw later remarks, lacks the implication of a more internationalist progressive agenda, e.g., socio-economic reform: "The test of membership of the Generation is . . . participation in a personal quest for renewed ideals and beliefs; interpretation of the problem of Spain in related terms, i.e., as a problem of mentality, rather than as political or economic and social; and acceptance of the role of creative writing primarily as an instrument for the examination of these problems" (The Generation of 1898 in Spain 14). See, also, the sections "Origins and Definitions" and "Conclusion" in this same work.

[269] Allen W. Phillips and Kathleen N. March, "Modernismo," The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993).

work--implicated as lacking a research base in the truths of their Spain and its experience, unconvincingly realistic, a pale reflection of history, and thus a pale reflection of the art most needed by the nation. By claiming his art as the spontaneous production of reality, the preface author--rather than admitting to an involuntary documentary art--would have been making a conscious self-effacing artistic affront on the avant-garde, whose contemplative aesthetic reflexivity Galdós may well have taken as egotistical. Yet, if a testament or act of artistic self-valorization,[270] emphasizing or distinguishing differences rather than similarities, then the preface ultimately failed in this gesture. Contemporaries like Valle-Inclán, while not managing or, perhaps, not intending to completely recover Galdós's reputation, left his assessment of the program of his elder vague and vulnerable to a critical literature with its own agenda set at responding artistically to abstract values and not national cultural realities. And the author, thus, defeated in the critical-historical sense, has since been established as canonical on aesthetic terms other than his own. The density of his allusions and the art of representation in this novel do indeed make him a literary author of the most rarified type--but they never leave him an aesthete.

As I have addressed the Galdós of Misericordia, I neither take him to be an aesthetic theorist nor a chronicler of events or compiler of historical data but rather position him between these critical stances, which predominate in a modern critical dialogue.[271] In doing so, I presume that re-reading Galdós will lead the way to re-readings

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[270] Indeed, the opening sentence of the preface in which Galdós makes reference to the legal processes of establishing literary ownership ("en la primavera de 1897, cuando terminó el litigio arbitral en que los Tribunales me reconocieron la propriedad íntegra de todas mis obras" [Pérez Galdós, "Prefacio del autor," Misericordia 5]), listing his series of works, might imply not only a testament of ownership but also an act of aesthetic self-definition.

[271] See Kronik for a distinction and evaluation of the two pillars of this dialogue as being textuality versus referentiality. These sides are represented, respectively, by Hazel Gold, The Reframing of Realism: Galdós and the Discourses of the Nineteenth-Century Spanish Novel (Durham NC: Duke UP, 1993) (countering Galdós and Realism as social commentary and positing Galdós's internal frame or use of internal data or theoretical principles) and by Geoffrey Ribbans, History and Fiction in Galdós's Narratives (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) (taking up fiction and history and stressing the use of outside data, i.e., history).

of other Catholic European authors--those taken as religious or even assumed to be a reactionary statement in nations on the cusp of modernization. Like Galdós, these authors may also have been engaging in similar dialogues, using traditional rhetorics to their advantage in attracting a reading public unwilling to take on Modernism.

In the final parts of this project, I will turn to reflect on these broader suppositions. To do so, I will briefly take up works of authors in similar critical circumstances as Misericordia, those often seen as "good children" and associated with moments of vanguardism (either aesthetically or socially) rather than social critique. In each case, I will demonstrate what strategies such authors have used in reshaping resources from their era's Catholic imaginary to vie for reforms that are not immediately identified today with oppositional politics (e.g., socialism or anarchy), yet which in their eras were clearly related to real political and social causes. Thereafter, in my Conclusion, I will return to the larger question of the necessity of reading realistically--recuperating religious and socio-critical contexts--and, moreover, of how these readings might contribute more generally to cultural studies.

Chapter Five:

Religious Imaginaries Beyond Misericordia

Until this point, Galdós's Misericordia has served as my key study and has provided a rich narrative source of the Catholic imaginary stemming from Spain. In this chapter, I would like to more broadly consider the religious imaginary as a resource for authors and artists and as a public literacy.

To do so, I have selected certain Western European works--particularly, from France and Spain--as representative examples for any number of works from societies in which Catholicism has persisted as a cultural presence or influence. As with Misericordia, my selection is somewhat biased toward works that offer more challenging critical statements to their readers. In this way, I can continue to counter the general critical assumption that religious thematics necessarily determine a text's orientation as either pious / conservative / reactionary or atheistic / anticlerical--a too-simple assessment of how the religious imaginary otherwise fuels national discussion and critique.

On the surface, these works often do not seem to confront the status quo (e.g., the decadent church of the late-nineteenth century). While some are seen as generally social-critical, they do not portray, for example, corrupt or lecherous priests or adulterous heroines--all of which would be offensive to a (e.g., bourgeois) Catholic readership, nor do they work on the grand canvas of state politics. When they take up religious thematics,

however, it is through the optic of a religious imaginary that offers them more resources for critique than open opposition. And so, again, I believe that the statements they make engage the polemics of the day in much more modern ways (e.g., as reformist) than many literary critics have assumed. In consequence, they often remain undervalued with respect to their more popular peers.

In the main sections of this chapter, I will treat a selection of works in brief, each as a further case for the way in which authors draw on contemporaneous archives of the religious imaginaries--Christian or Catholic--to engage their publics. For each case, I will first briefly situate author and work within standard accounts.[272] I will then re-read a significant scene sequence or episode as resting on the respective religious imaginary to make a more pointed argument than critics have recovered. Thereafter, I will consider how each work's internal argument speaks with reference to a critical moment in culture. My brief conclusion will reiterate how this literature argues for a different sense of how representation works in the age of Realism and Naturalism, other than how it has been known to a successive generation of artists and critics.

Victor Hugo's Les Misérables (1862): A Figuration of St. Paul's Community

French literary icon Victor Hugo (1802-1885) captured not only the academic but also the popular imagination in his contribution to the Romantic aesthetic, his flair as a storyteller, and, most notably, his personification of a national and even an international democratic ideal.[273] While early in his career he had embraced old regime structures and

[272] To situate these works, I rely particularly on standard handbooks, so that each reading will emerge more clearly against the background of wide-spread assumptions about the authors and their works. However, the conclusions I draw about each novel represent points of view beyond those in current criticism.

[273] Concerning his influence on the literary aesthetic, his preface to Cromwell (1827) is considered to be a Romantic manifesto (e.g., combining the sublime with the grotesque) and his Hernani (1830) marks the triumph of Romanticism in French theatre. For this and other data on the author's life and work appearing throughout this section, I rely on the following standard presentations: the introductory and concluding

values (his early volume of poetry celebrates the monarchy, for example), before mid-century he broke with them--even abandoning his formal Catholic faith--to critically espouse social reform and humanitarian causes. Living in voluntary political exile during France's Second Empire (1852-70), he is particularly known for disparaging the Napoleonic legacy; he called instead for reconciliation and nonviolent solutions often punctuated by his calls for a spiritual order to supercede political factionalism.

Published in exile, Hugo's epic Romantic[274] novel Les Misérables, translated sometimes as The Underclass (1862),[275] has been considered one of nineteenth-century Europe's greatest novels, although modern theatrical adaptations such as the familiar "Les Miz" musical have won it even more enduring popular success. Literary history traditionally associates it with the spirit of restoration France (c.1815-35), as the nation made a transition from monarchy to republic, and then back to empire. It also is considered to be socially critical chiefly in its questioning sociopolitical progress within the nation--asking who has been left behind. The work treats secular themes in their

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sections and Chapters 1, 4, 5, and (particularly) 8 of Laurence M. Porter's Victor Hugo, Twayne's World Authors Ser. 883 (New York: Twayne, 1999); Kathryn M. Grossman's Les Misérables: Conversion, Revolution, Redemption, Twayne's Masterwork Studies. 160 (New York: Twayne, 1996) (also appearing as Kathryn M. Grossman, "Les Misérables": A Reader's Companion, Twayne's Masterwork Studies [New York: Twayne, 1996]); and the section on the author (153-204) in André Lagarde and Laurent Michard's XIXe Siècle: Les Grands auteurs françias du programme anthologie et histoire littèraire (Paris: Bordas, 1985). While by no means representative of current scholarship, they still set up conventional horizons of expectation about the authors and their work.

[274] The work is acclaimed as Romantic in large part for its stylistic dependence on contrasting oppositional forces, e.g., "le monde en termes de manichéisme: une lutte épique oppose sans cesse l'esprit du bien à l'esprit du mal" (Lagarde and Michard 156-7). Yet it also demonstrates typical Realist and Naturalist aesthetic norms of the period, respectively, its detailed Parisian topography and its serious depiction of working classes influenced by heredity and environment. In the latter, it emphasizes the inequities of the sexual exploitation of women (notably what even Naturalist Émile Zola's work would not do for that gender) (Porter 130).

[275] For the French text, I use the still current Victor Hugo, Les Misérables (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1967). For the English, I use Victor Hugo, Les Misérables, trans. Lee Fahnestock and Norman MacAfee (New York: New American Library, 1987), an unabridged edition with notes based on the classic C. E. Wilbour translation. The former will appear in subsequent references as "Hugo, Les Misérables (page number[s])," and the latter will appear as "Hugo, Les Misérables, trans. Fahnestock and MacAfee: (page number[s])."

impact on individuals--the struggle of war, class structure, even the spiritual well-being of France--, yet critics recognize in it a spiritual drama for individual protagonists. They frequently cast the protagonist Jean Valjean as a representation of Christ in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13), one who undergoes temptation after temptation before he offers a vision of redemption through offering up his body and name and becomes a kind of redeemer for the downtrodden and lost.

As Hugo tells the story, a Valjean just freed from a nineteen-year prison sentence begins to explore the potential of his rehabilitated soul, but also, possibly, to become a Savior whose example may redeem his people in a more just world than that which imprisoned him. Trying now to socially rehabilitate himself (almost despite the restrictive state laws in place that threaten to keep him from so doing), Valjean will in many ways succeed. As a stranger in a small town, he rebuilds his life, becoming a factory owner, political figure, and local humanitarian known affectionately as "Père" or "Father" Madeleine (a reference to St. Mary Magdalene, a recovered sinner). When, however, he goes so far as to take exception with the law and to stand up for justice, choosing to shelter rather than abandon a laborer-turned-prostitute, Fantine, he will become the suspect and eventual arrestee of the local police inspector Javert (who had long suspected the mayor's true identity). Evading imprisonment this time, Valjean will take pity on the plight of Fantine, now deceased, and redeem the situation in at least one way by retrieving her illegitimate daughter Cosette from harm's way and arranging for her foster care and education at a convent in Paris.

Attempting now to live furtively but respectably in the city (outside the letter of the law but within its spirit), Valjean is nevertheless again compromised when Cosette catches the eye of a young liberal Marius (estranged from his more conservative family), and the two fall in love. He soon after will plan to move out of the country with Cosette,

but plans are stopped when Marius fails to receive Cosette's note, warning of her departure. In another attempted rescue of a victim of restoration France, Valjean will choose to go in search of him the night of the abortive 1832 Paris insurrection. Finding his old rival Javert held prisoner and Marius wounded, he sets the one free and carries the other to safety through the sewers of Paris. Subsequently, Javert will again officially apprehend Valjean but, unable to resolve whether to arrest the man to whom he owes his life or to set free an escaped convict, he consequently will drown himself in the Seine to avoid the choice of which justice to uphold. Thereafter, Valjean will live out his remaining days estranged from Cosette and Marius, only to be reconciled with them on his deathbed. Here, finally, it is implied that Valjean will be recompensed by angels.

In many prevailing critical views, Valjean's prosperity under the depicted restored monarchy leaves him open to the temptation of moving from the role of oppressed to oppressor. For this reason, he must consciously hold himself in check--proving his resistance to temptation by his good actions at every turn. By his first self-sacrificing act, his protection of Fantine, however, he resists hypocrisy: he resolves the situation he causes, as it had been caused by his own order, in its moral judgment of her as a mother out of wedlock--he stands up for the fact that she had been prevented from earning an honest wage. In this, he follows Christ's course by refusing to denounce Mary Magdalene. Subsequently, Valjean's respectful treatment of Cosette frees him from the charge of abuse of power: she does not wish to become a nun, so he takes the risk for her of moving into the city. His rescue of Marius and Javert again attests to his selflessness, and his withdrawal from lives of Marius and Cosette bears witness to a new standard of social justice in the face of human love, as this social mixed marriage predicts a better future for France. All these choices, often made in the spirit and not by the letter of the

law, trace Valjean's story as a redemption tale: he saves himself by self-sacrifice and by saving others, redeeming those lost souls of a nationally degenerate France.

The message of the novel thus seems straightforward: for Christians, it is sacrifice and true spiritual justice, not human love and the church, that bring one closer to God. The novel does end with a question, asking if the next generation, that of Marius and Cosette (and their anticipated children) will have in fact learned from the example, that is, to humble themselves (to acknowledge Valjean's sacrifice for them and to live without hypocrisy) as a means of finding their own salvation in God's kingdom.

Convention has focused on how Valjean's acts of redemption prepare the way for a new France, just as Christ's sacrifice does for a new Church. Critics thus frequently associate Valjean with Christ, as suits the moral message of the novel, but not necessarily its moral as a specifically national story. Yet, as in the case of Misericordia, the local religious (Catholic) references lead to more tangible socio-political readings. Hugo has chosen material from his world's Catholic imaginary to add a figural or anagogical dimension to Valjean, who is made to appear in the text not as Christ, but actually as a different religious figure transposed into the secular world of France. That extra dimension allows the national story appear in a different light.

From the very start of the novel, in fact, Les Misérables evokes not Jesus, but rather another Bible figure and saint: Saint Paul, whose figuration in this case will also point to rather almost unprecedented secular and progressive agendas coded into the novel, accessible to those who know basic lines of church history.

The novel's initial scenes already mark Valjean as Peter in great detail, as an embittered ex-convict plays out a conversion along a road (the central episode in St. Paul's story as he was converted on the road to Damascus). Seeking food and lodging at the house of the Bishop of Digne, affectionately called "Bienvenue" (literally, the

salutation "welcome"), Valejan is welcomed to stay the night, but repays his host rather ungraciously, making off with his silverware. When the theft is later detected by authorities, it is the bishop who nevertheless persists as gracious or merciful, feigning that he had given the silverware as a gift and adding his two silver candlesticks to the loot. By this gesture, the bishop suggests to Valjean an alternate way of life: he has given a moral example of self-sacrifice in the hopes that through example he can lead the sinner to repent his sins and to lead the life of a good man. Shortly after, on the road leading away from the Bishop's house, Valjean will experience the terms of this urged conversion more palpably.

Passing a little Savoyard, a chimneysweep, on that road, the scene unfolds as Valjean watches how the boy carelessly engages in a game of tossing up coins and letting them drop. Interjecting himself into the game, Valjean catches one of those silver coins under his foot. Now engaged in a kind of torment, he remains seated with his eyes to the ground, seemingly not hearing the child's pleas to return the money. When finally looking up, Valjean is bewildered. He asks confusedly, "Qui est là?" or "Who is there?", and the child answers him, "Petit Gervais! moi! moi! rendez-moi mes quarante sous, s'il vous plaît! ôtez votre pied, monsieur . . . ôterez-vous votre pied?" (Hugo, Les Misérables 136) ["Me, sir . . . Little Gervais! Me! Me! Give me my forty sous, please! Take away your foot, Sir . . . will you move your foot?" {Hugo, Les Misérables, trans. Fahnestock and MacAfee: 108}]. (Note the allusion to St. Gervase, a second century child-martyr commonly invoked to protect against thieves.[276]) Valjean, however, still refuses to concede the coins to the child, and at that moment he has a dual vision of the Bishop Bienvenue and of himself--the Bishop's image growing ever brighter and blinding and

[276] Terry H. Jones, "Saint Gervase," Patron Saints Index, 2003, 23 June 2009 <http://saints.sqpn.com/>. Chimneysweeps are also familiar nineteenth-century children victims, since they were often undernourished to keep them small and thus able to climb into flues to clean them.

his own fading away. Taking this vision as a sign, he comes to immediately repent his torment of the child and returns to the Bishop's doorstep, this time willingly.

A secular reader would recognize this scene as a promise of individual reform or a changed lifestyle on the basis of an attach of conscience; one more versed in a Catholic optic would also see this as a conversion vision, a turn away from evil-doing and to a particular kind of good. St. Paul's vision of a beggar, after all, is paradigmatic, and it is paralleled in a conversion vision like Valjean's, when a civil persecutor turns into one of the founders of a new church and into Christ's Apostle, spreading Christianity to the heathens. The figural correspondence between the characters is critical here: Jesus was in a state of grace, and tempted by the devil, and so, by Catholic logic, he cannot be easily considered to be refigured in Valjean, who has stolen and moved to steal again from a child martyr. The St. Paul references are much better fits, as this convert and eventual missionary for the new Church had to renounce his persecuting of Christians and to turn away from evil and toward the good.

Details of Church history amplify these comparisons, as they explicitly tie this convert to questions of law. As the early Christian Church of the persecution era under the Romans was principally composed of Jewish or Gentile converts,[277] the conversion experience holds a significant place in much of the Christian religious imaginary (so much so that, e.g., the Catholic church dedicates a feast day solely to this specific event in the life of St. Paul, the most exemplary of converts). The conventional storyline of this

[277] My sources for Paul include Terry H. Jones, "Saint Paul the Apostle," Patron Saints Index, 2003, 29 July 2008 <http://saints.sqpn.com/>; "St. Paul," Encyclopedia of World Biography, 2004, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries. 29 July 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; and "Paul, Apostle, St.," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 23 July 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>. For the topic of conversion, I use "conversion," A Dictionary of the Bible, 1997, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 29 July 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>, which also mentions Paul.

experience most generally implies a crisis of conscience, a mystical union, an acceptance of the life of Christ as exemplary, and, in certain cases, a bringing to recognition of the convert as an agent of God (often one least expected).

The latter scenario would primarily be that of Paul, who, in the first century after Christ, was born as "Saul" to an upper class Roman-Jewish family and was designated to become a rabbinical student, educated in the tradition of Pharisaism. In this tradition, obedience to the law given to the Jewish prophet Moses (Mosaic Law) was seen as a means of communal justification and salvation. Holding this law sacred, a young Paul would prosecute members of a newly forming sect that proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah and that through Him one purportedly could find salvation (even repentant sinners) by entering into a mystical union--rather than by following any set of external laws. A figure to be feared in these communities, Paul would act, for example, as a consenting witness to the stoning of the Christian child Stephan (also a Catholic martyr-saint), who like many of Paul's victims a criminal on paper but with the heart and mind of a devout believer. The figure of Paul is thus imbued with references to contrasts between the letter and the spirit of the law.

The decision that Paul would make to convert or leave his life of law (a false law, or a law of the letter rather than of spirit) for another is marked conspicuously in his story by his renaming: "Saul" became "Paul." The events of his conversion are recounted in different versions in the New Testament (Acts 9:3-19; 22:6-21; 26:12-18; also figured in Galatians 1:12-16). These passages show how he responds to the call and subsequent vision of Christ while traveling along a road from Jerusalem to Damascus: "[A]s he journeyed he approached Damascus . . . suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you

are persecuting" (Acts 9:3-6). Temporarily blinded by the vision, he remains helpless and fasts for three days until baptized by another Christian. Thereafter, Paul would become a missionary and patron of the Gentiles (the very people he had condemned), encouraging new Christian converts and nurturing those Christians particularly in doubt or under persecution. He would organize informal communal gatherings held in Christ's name send letters of encouragement (letters which are assumed to constitute nearly one third of the New Testament). Further, he would preach that community members, that is, "Jews, Greeks, slaves, free, male, female" (Galatians 3:28), should live as brothers and sisters and be unified by no other structure (e.g., external laws) than their faith in the teachings of Christ and in the spirit of their community.

Recognizing Paul as a more adequate figural key to the Valjean-Gervase scene leads one to a different sense of Hugo's narrative, particularly with respect to the models of law and faith-forgiveness that distinguish traditional Pharisee Judaism from early Christianity. For example, as Valjean moulds himself into the upright mayor Madeleine, his new civil servant status puts him in the position of enforcing a criminal code with which he himself is at odds and which victimized him, turning a hungry man into a thief. The scene in which the poor street tramp Fantine is arrested, for instance, dramatizes this ideological tension. Not only would Valjean be given the chance to reverse his former hypocrisy, but also, in doing so, he would essentially be choosing between conflicting ideological models and to reaffirm his conversion to a new law. And by ordering Fantine's release, he has made a choice in a kind of dilemma also associated with that of the Christian Paul, forced by conscience to attend to the difference between the letter and the spirit of the law.

Once Valjean has finished playing out Paul's conversion in an intense internal struggle, there will come to the new convert an external challenge to his faith. The kind

of strict legalism identified with Paul before his conversion, which Valjean as a local authority now seems to have rejected, appears on the scene, embodied by the suspicions of the police inspector Javert. Having himself been born in prison to a prostitute, an outcast, Javert, like Valjean and any Christian, has the capacity to choose a role as enforcer of either model--state law or the morality of human decency that acknowledges human weakness as something other than malevolence or culpability. In his pursuit of the rehabilitated Valjean, Javert operates as a simulacrum of the kind of false law--Mosaic or Old Testament law, and by extension, ancien régime law--that drove Paul before his conversion. He chooses to pursue and prosecute a man who has done much good, yet still, on the books, has not served his term for a minor infraction under the old order. Yet at his arrest of Valjean, this prosecutor will finally be obliged to make a more active spiritual choice. That is to say, he must choose to arrest a man who now is a criminal only by the letter of the law--but no longer in spirit. And when Javert chooses suicide, he will in this sense fail to either continue as adherent of the older faith or accept a new one (by conversion). He cannot choose conversion, but neither can he be an active agent of the old unjust law. He is a martyr to an unjust law, as he cannot leave Rome where Paul did (and Louis XIV often appeared in art as Julius Caesar).

Where Javert refuses to (or is simply unable to) become yet another convert to the new order, another Paul renouncing his old profession, Valjean simultaneously continues to develop along the lines suggested by the Paul analogy. Aware of the implacability of the civil community as the failed-Paul Javert perpetuates it, Valjean becomes the champion of a community of a new order. He understands that the remnants of France's Old Regime still make it nearly impossible for the poor and unfortunate to avoid being criminalized, as he himself was. Beginning with his personal absolution of the scorned Fantine, he follows with the recuperation of her daughter Cosette and of Marius. Fantine,

Cosette, and Marius are all outcasts and orphans who, estranged from their families or communities by death or ideology, are brought back into community by Valjean. Open to the prostitute, the bastard child, the prodigal son, the community that Valjean builds, as Paul had built Christ's church, operates on principles of association with higher orders of faith and reconciliation. By French law, all are criminals of one order or another, but by the laws revealed to this Paul, they are the core of a new Church that will indeed help the poorest of the poor.

The correspondence between Valjean's and Paul's communities within the contemporaneous debates of the age suggests that Hugo's network of religious allusions here operates as a subtle and highly polemical, if not overtly politicized, gesture. And this polemics is not merely conducted by analogy, nor is the situation only a figural-theoretical one for abstract meditation. Throughout the nineteenth century, the nature of Christianity, in particular Paul's primitive Church with its notion of community rather than a top-down priesthood was very much at issue. Initiating that interest, a school of nineteenth-century (Protestant) theologians[278] defined the evolution of the church by identifying two contrastive currents in it, Petrine (of the Apostle Peter) and Pauline (of the Apostle Paul) Christianity. Petrine Christianity was seen as corresponding with the values and laws that governed Paul's inherited Judaism, not only the kind of justification by Mosaic Law but also as modeled on hierarchical structure of Judaism with the high priest at the summit (in Catholic-Christianity refigured as the pope). In contrast, Pauline Christianity was defined as a faction that insisted on justification by faith alone and also on a synodal or presbyterian type of rule--rule by local community, as in Protestant

[278] For basic discussions of Pauline Christianity, I depend on M. B. Schepers, "Tübingen School," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2nd ed, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 29 July 2008 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/> and the introductory section in James D. G. Dunn, ed., The Cambridge Companion to St Paul, Cambridge Companions to Religion (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003) 1-15.

churches. (According to this theory, Catholicism emerged in the second and third centuries as the compromise of both ideologies.) In the latter approach, scholars found in Paul's legacy the work of a liberal thinker or theologian, claiming that in Paul's Church Mosaic law had been abrogated or transferred to Christ's law and that the distinction between Jew and Gentile had been eliminated in a new vision of what the Church means. Moreover, the kinds of church communities that Paul set up were seen as formative of a new social reality, embracing members of a range of social echelons (excluding only the highest), especially those who experienced a status inconsistency or contradiction in this regard (e.g., influential women).

Here again, a more culturally precise reading of the biblical and Catholic allusions in the novel suggests a very well-drawn political allegory woven into the text, one with contemporary resonance. A more modern national France is anticipated in the marriage of Cosette, proletariat, and Marius, aristocrat, and by their future middle-class offspring, but that promise is not yet fulfilled in a France not yet ready to "convert" to a new legal order--they do not marry within the novel's narrative arc, because they cannot. In reconsidering the text as a more specifically religious-political debate, in consequence, it advocates for more than upward mobility or the forming of a middle class (liberalism), but as more specifically socially reformist.[279] With the implicit but clear reference to Pauline Christianity, the actions of pardoning, recuperating, and of giving refuge to orphans of all classes all imply not merely general virtue, but a more specific commitment to equalization before the law in regard to class and hereditary rights.

The text thus appeals to very specific legal reforms and to revisions of social structure, not just to generalized virtues. And Valjean as Paul, the builder of the Christian

[279] Here, I am informed by Hobsbawn, The Age of Revolution 1-4, 234-52, 297-308 and Breunig and Levinger, The Revolutionary Era 162-72.

church, supplies a vision of those necessary revisions in his conversion and leadership among new Christians. Hugo shows his readers the members of that new but not-yet-present church in the ranks of those politically marginalized liberals and proletarians falling outside of the organizing principles of the French restoration and its persistent class hierarchies. Their situations, however, and the decisions facing them are very real: they can drive Javert to suicide, in their challenge to the inherited orders. The story of Valjean's suffering is thus more properly read as a specific historical-political recommendation for a non-hierarchical and non-class-structured national reform program--one that departs less from the more conservative liberalism of the day and, as in Galdós, moves closer to the era's critiques of class privilege--or maybe even socialism.

Gustave Flaubert's "Un Coeur simple" (1877): A Critical Application of a Modern Eucharist Theology

Religious rhetorical tools can be deployed in less obvious fashion in more canonical Realist literature than they are in Hugo's prose. A notable case is France's Gustave Flaubert (1821-80), known as one of the greatest theorists and practitioners of the novel in world literature.[280] Despite this almost universal recognition as a consummate story-teller and artist, Flaubert has not been considered particularly progressive, either in his artistic or political views. Nicknamed the "hermit of Croisset" for the insular artistic life he led at his mother's estate, he would become known otherwise as a confirmed bourgeois resigned to the shifting political climate (e.g., in

[280] This critical approach and brief biographical detail on the author relies on Anthony Levi, "Flaubert, Gustave, 1821-1880," Guide to French Literature: 1789 to the Present (Chicago: St. James Press, 1992) 228-40 and William J. Berg and Laurey K. Martin, Gustave Flaubert, Twayne's World Authors Ser. 866, (New York: Twayne, 1997). specifically, 1-13.

1848, the year of the Second Republic, residing in Paris and, from 1863, maintaining social contacts with the imperial court of Napoleon III).

Artistically, however, Flaubert would leave an indelible stamp on Realism in the development of the novel as a lyrical and exacting prose piece (e.g., in search of "le mot juste" or "the precise word"). And such highly refined turns of phrase would be associated with what have become the traditional themes of his work, for example, fatality, pessimism, a scorn of self-satisfied bourgeois provincialism (the shadow of a figure that he himself might not have escaped, for instance, in a reluctance to put anything ahead of art), and the universality of human stupidity, selfishness, and maliciousness (expressed in his disgust with rebellious Parisian workers and appall at the events of the revolutionary Paris Commune in 1971, the year following the Third Republic). A fairly hard-line artist, then, Flaubert would not personally be drawn out of his lukewarm rapport with critics and with the public to claim a more overt socio-political position until the publication of "Un Coeur simple " or "A Simple Heart," appearing both in installments and in a series of three "contes"--"tales" or short stories--in Trois Contes (1877).[281]

This tale is known for its rare sentimentality and seemingly honest compassion, far removed from the jaded voices of society--it is deceptively simple in its voice. For this reason, most particularly, it has been distinguished from Flaubert's earlier masterpiece, Madame Bovary (1857).[282] Critics have a love affair of sorts with the

[281] For the original French, I use Gustave Flaubert, "Un Coeur simple," Trois Contes (Paris: Bordas, 1975 [1984?]) ; and for the translation, Gustave Flaubert, "A Simple Heart," Three Tales, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Penguin, 1961 [1984?]). The former will appear in subsequent references as "Flaubert, 'Un Coeur simple' (page number[s])," and the latter will appear as "Flaubert, 'A Simple Heart,' trans. Fahnestock and MacAfee: (page number[s])."

[282] Looking more closely at the history of critical reception of both works creates another interesting contrast. "Un Coeur simple" enjoyed critical and popular success at the time of publication and continues to enjoy the same now. Madame Bovary created a scandal in its time (so much so that Flaubert was brought to

virtuous country maid Félicité (literally, "happiness" or what is "appropriate or pleasing") in a way not known for the earlier novel's racy petit bourgeois Emma Bovary, even though the depiction of the latter is considered to be near faultless on an artistic level. Yet Félicité, not unlike Misericordia's Benina, is beloved to critics, who favor her and her poignant, yet admittedly countrified, story.

Today's readers easily take at face value her overly simple piety (reading her idiosyncratic devotional practices as charming or naive sacrileges) or paint her often-misdirected affection for others as the self-sacrificing and selfless characterization of a saint (e.g., Berg and Martin). Yet they overlook a possible irony in the character's peculiar vision of the Holy Spirit, the tale's almost pseudo-religious context, and the period polemics about the Eucharist, a theological polemic of the age. Inside this text's rather conservative shell is a more nuanced socio-cultural critique, accessible through the layers of its religious allusion--and actually one of the more biting of Flaubert's critiques of official France.

Taking place in the provincial village of Pont-L'Évêque (Normandy, France), "A Simple Heart" recounts the rather mundane life of its protagonist. Although virtually without plot, the tale's individual episodes are distinguished by the love objects and personal devotions (not always religious or orthodox ones) in them. A young Félicité is at first seen expressing romantic love for a country lad, who will desert her. She then shows

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trial for offending public morals), yet today the work is more consistently critically hailed--being considered moreover one of the greatest novels ever written. For these details and the standardized critical views on "Un Coeur simple" that appear in this section, I have again consulted Berg and Martin, Gustave Flaubert and, in addition, A. W. Raitt, Flaubert: Trois Contes, Critical Guides to French Texts 89 (London: Grant & Cutler, 1991).

maternal affection for her employer's children, Paul and Virginie, until the one's departure and the other's death (the names here are a clear allusion to Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's famous 1787-novel about shipwrecked lovers). Then she shows the same affection for her nephew Victor, until his death in America. Ultimately, she finds a love object in a kind of spiritual dedication to her pet parrot Loulou, in a set of scenes describing her room that critics follow avidly. While the bird will come to its own untimely death, Loulou is nonetheless preserved for Félicité as a stuffed effigy, transformed into one of a menagerie of religious trinkets and icons gathered on an altar because she reminds the maid of the Holy Spirit.

To understand the narrative on a more culturally specific level, one must look more closely at an earlier moment in the text. Just after Paul is sent to boarding school and at the very beginning of her affections for Virginie, Félicité will engage with her young charge in a religious context. The scene sequence in question first depicts a typical day, when she accompanies Virginie to catechism class, a formal instruction in the doctrine of the church. On such days, the maid will be found either moved by the religious commentary or dozing off to sleep. The reader will be privy to Félicité's more lucid moments on theology (although the term is relative), her musings on certain mysteries and dogma such as "l'Agneau" or the "Lamb of God" and "Saint Esprit" or "Holy Spirit" for which she will express her devotion to "lamb" and "dove."[283]

[283] " . . . [T]outes ces choses familières dont parle l'Evangile, se trouvaient dans sa vie; le passage de Dieu les avait sanctifiées; et elle aima plus tendrement les agneaux par amour de l'Agneau, les colombes à cause du Saint-Esprit" (Flaubert, "Un Coeur simple" 60). [" . . . [A]ll those familiar things of which the Gospels speak had their place in her life. God had sanctioned them in passing, so that she loved the lambs more

The maid's personal catechism will find echoes in other moments when she mimics Virginie's religions observances, for example, at the "Fête Dieu" or the feast of Corpus Christi. An example is the maid's exposition of a formal religious ceremony, Virginie's First Communion in which she, as the catechized, will be dazzled by the motions of the ritual:

> La cloche tinta. Les têtes se courbèrent; il y eut un silence. Aux éclats de l'orgue, les chantres et la foule entonnèrent l'Agnus Dei; puis le défile des garçons commença; et après eux, les filles se levèrent. Pas à pas, et les mains jointes, elles allaient vers l'autel tout illuminé, s'agenouillaient sur la première marche recevaient l'hostie, et dans le même ordre revenaient à leurs prie-Dieu. Quand ce fut le tour de Virginie, Félicité se pencha pour la voir; et, avec l'imagination que donnent les vraies tendresses, il lui sembla qu'elle était elle-même cette enfant; sa figure devenait la sienne, sa robe l'habillait, son coeur lui battait dans la poitrine; au moment d'ouvrir la bouche, en fermant les paupières, elle manqua s'évanour. (Flaubert, "Un Coeur simple" 61)
>
> [The bell tinkled. Every head bowed low, and there was a silence. Then, to the thunderous accompaniment of the organ, choir and congregation joined in singing the Agnus Dei. Next the boy's procession began, and after that the girls got up from their seats. Slowly, their hands joined in prayer, they went towards the brightly lit altar, knelt on the first step, received the Host one by one, and went back to their places in the same order. When it was Virginie's turn, Félicité leant forward to see her, and in one of those imaginative flights born of real affection, it seemed to her that she herself was in the child's place. Virginie's face became her own, Virginie's dress clothed her, Virginie's heart was pounding in her breast; and as she closed her eyes and opened her mouth, she almost fainted away. {Flaubert, "Un Coeur simple," trans. Fahnestock and MacAfee: 30-31}]

The author characterizes his heroine through this scene, which would be familiar, nostalgic even, for a Catholic reader. And as the climax of a sequence that touches on familiar points of reference--Lamb of God, Holy Spirit, Corpus Christi, and First Communion--it will emphatically point the readers' attention toward the very central liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. Here, a reader will be reminded of the narrative

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tenderly for love of the Lamb of God, and the doves for the sake of the Holy Ghost" {Flaubert, "A Simple Heart," trans. Fahnestock and MacAfee: 30}.]

network unfolding the dogma surrounding the celebration itself--narratives extremely familiar within Catholic culture.

Yet the Eucharist and First Communion is anything but an uncontested site within religious history. Since the Protestant Reformation, the Eucharistic celebration has been for Christian churches a defining point in liturgy, and one in which the notion of the existence and presence of the Holy Spirit is key.[284] Most externally, it is a ritual performed during the Mass or church service where the priest (in imitation of Christ at the Last Supper) will bless bread (host) and wine, offering them as a shared meal within the congregation. Theologically, Christian churches remain split in their views on the significance of this act and the interpretation and implementation of its ritual. For most, as with the Catholic church, the partaking of the communal meal will signify that Christians share in a new covenant with an Old Testament God. This covenant was made

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[284] For the Catholic culture here, I rely on the following sources: "Eucharistic prayers," The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2006, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>; "epiclesis," The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2006, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>; Monika Hellwig, "Eucharist," Encyclopedia of Religion, 2005, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; Michael Baughman, "Eucharist," Encyclopedia of Religion and Spiritual Development, 2006, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries. 25 January 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; "Corpus Christi, Feast of," The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2006, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, University of Texas Libraries, 24 January 2009 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>; "Corpus Christi," Medieval Art: A Topical Dictionary, 1996, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; "Corpus Christi," Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations of the World, 2005, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; "Holy Spirit" in The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Hans Schwarz, "Holy Spirit," Encyclopedia of Science and Religion, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; L. P. Siger, "Holy Spirit, Iconography of," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; and M. J. Donnelly's "God (Holy Spirit)," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>.

possible through the sacrifice of Christ or the "Lamb of God," as He is called, who would lead the masses (not just a Chosen few or the Jews) out of sin. Yet the Catholic church also teaches what is called the "real presence" of Christ or that His body and blood will become present at a precise moment--marked by the ringing of a bell--in the consecrated bread and wine. (Local Catholic celebrations or the feast of "Corpus Christi," quite literally the "Body of Christ," reflect this point of adoration.) As an integral part of a more universal belief surrounding this rite, it is the Holy Spirit--a manifestation of God and, for Catholics, a separate divine person or presence--who is said to guide and invest the priest with his ceremonial powers or prowess (especially in more modern church life, Eucharistic prayers will overtly call upon the Holy Spirit). Moreover, with the evocation of the very Spirit that as "tongues of fire" characteristically guided Christ's disciples after His Resurrection (Acts 2: 1-4), the ritual takes on strong eschatological overtones pointing more precisely to the promise of salvation at the dawn of a new age. Most commonly, the Spirit as depicting this meaning will be represented as an ethereal dove.

Returning to the Flaubert scene in question but with the Catholic cultural references now in mind, the protagonist's assumed charming or naive sacrilege--or a confused mind's babbling about Catholicism--might take on deeper resonances, critiquing a more particular gesture of critique of Catholic spirituality and dogma. In one sense, the tale asks its reader to identify with the protagonist, either as a child or a doctrinal innocent, thus creating distance between that reader and church teachings and the Mass spectacle--it estranges the too familiar, by aligning it with false doctrine, so that a reader aligning him-or herself with Félicité is also aligning against standard doctrine.

For example, the expression "the bell tinkled" shows up in the description of the First Communion scene (above) replaces the moment's more formal theological description, "the host was consecrated"--the one would stress an outward form and the

other a specific Church content. That passage does reflect Félicité's point of view, and so the error of her ways when she shows similar superficial grasp of other Church trappings, such as when she affirms her faith by showing a love of lambs and doves, mechanically rehearses its rites, and feels transported in the pageantry she creates. She is thus not just a simple, naïve, or bad reader (like her literary cousin Emma Bovary), she also is a bad Catholic reader of signs, because she expresses her devotion to the symbols, taking signifiers as the endpoints in themselves rather than moving behind them to their meanings.[285] In this light, she would seem to reflect the position on the Eucharist that the Catholic church is often charged with: understanding the form of the observance but none of its spiritual content.

Félicité is thus from the start wedged between two roles: religious simpleton and arguably polemical follower of Catholic forms, but once Loulou arrives on the scene as a physical analogue to the Holy Spirit (yet not a dove but a parrot), the problem she poses for the reader's identification is heightened. The bird is quite literally separated out into his semantic parts--his stuffed body the signifier, his essence the signified--, as yet another instance of the same mistake, that is, a misdirection of affection toward the signifier, the letter of the Church law, rather than to the signified, a state of spirit. Later, however, at the feast of Corpus Christi, an ailing Félicité will want to add Loulou to the altar (a gesture that the priest out of sympathy perhaps does not refuse). At this point in the narrative, her personal religious icon now becomes incorporated into the local collective religious imagination of the town. As she dies during the procession of the feast with the parrot, she has a delusion of the bird hovering overhead, like the Holy

[285] When Félicité returns the day following the pageant of communion--that is, on an ordinary church day--to receive the sacrament again, she will not feel the same sense of rapture and is even more greatly disappointed. Here we see a discrete critique of Catholicism's focus on ceremonial externals (an argument that I will take up later in this section).

Spirit dove. With this image, the author shows us not just a deluded but naïve and good soul, but also one specific kind of church community, whose affections for an outward symbol can be more important than its meaning. The author thus offers a very specific critique of one kind of religiosity, based on empty rhetoric but still expecting salvation, set against a town (which is, after all, is named "Bishop's Bridge") hat has chosen to bend its ritual out of affection for its afflicted. The dead woman's parrot was less lunacy than an expression of a true sentiment, the symbol of some sort of real (if socially delusional) commitment to religion.

Flaubert's France had heard such critiques before, because it had secularized to the point where the Catholic church had increasingly been relegated to the status of socio-political backdrop, and the spiritual life of obligation and pious practice that it preached had, many asserted, largely stagnated into formalism and neglect of the needs of individual parishioners.[286] In this era, efforts had thus arisen to rebuild Catholicism as a thoroughly human activity integrated into local communities, that is, directed toward a communal experience of salvation through re-Christianization. The goal of these period reforms was to reconnect Catholic ritual with spiritual practice and with the lives of Catholics.

A significant part of this church revitalization and reorganization was aimed specifically at recovering full and active liturgical participation for all church members, especially by participation in the Eucharist. What would much later in the century be

[286] In addition to the foundational sources for French church history already mentioned in my project introduction, I rely here, in particular, on K. Kavanaugh and M. B. Pennington's "Spirituality, Christian (History of)," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; K. F. Pecklers, "Liturgical Movement, I: Catholic," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Thompson Gale, University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/gvrl/>; Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley, "Liturgical Movement," The Encyclopedia of Christianity. Vol. 3, J-O, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997 [2002?]); and Chadwick, A History of the Popes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 361-64.

called the "Liturgical Movement," this effort was begun in France as early as the 1830s and 1840s, with gestures that a French Catholic would have perceived concretely as novelties. For example, prayer books in the local churches were replaced by missals (containing not only prayers but responses and hymns from the Mass service), helping the faithful to follow the sense of the ritual and to encourage a sense of more authentic community during Mass. However, much attention was also paid to enhancing the liturgy's externals--thus on the form of the participation and not necessarily on the liturgy's content. And these earliest efforts were left open to certain criticism, for failing to reach the masses.[287] In the context of the era's spiritual moment of the era, in consequence, the novelist's Félicité would have had timely resonance, critiquing the sacramental externals that stood in place of substance for many believers. She has love objects that cannot lead her to true romantic love and catechism class that lacks reference to divine love, so she (and by extension, her society) cannot be improved. In her world, both the religion of the heart, like the religion of church ritual, remain external forms rather than real appeals to soul--colorful, stuffed parrots. She is a Madame Bovary for France's Catholic culture, for those outside its literary culture.

Flaubert may have been making this religious reference even more specifically political, as well. The protagonist's life dates, 1809-1853, take these theological references into an additional dimension.[288] Each of these dates falls the year after a major event in the reign of the Napoleons. In the year 1808, Napoleon I occupied Rome,

[287] It would not be until the end of the nineteenth / beginning of the twentieth century that the movement would assume a more popular character. Largely under Pope Pius X (1903-1914), it would socialize its liturgy by promoting the use of common and translated prayer books and by encouraging a more widespread participation and frequent communion (Fahlbusch and Bromiley, "Liturgical Movement," The Encyclopedia of Christianity; Chadwick, A History of Popes 361-64).

[288] For the subtleties of the rocky beginnings of France's Third Republic (including the Paris Commune of 1871), I have referred to Jeremy D. Popkin, A History of Modern France (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001) 132-40. For a more general history of events in this time period, I have consulted Bernard Grun, The Timetables of History: A Horizontal Linkage of People and Events (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

invaded Spain, and took Barcelona and Madrid; Joseph Bonaparte became King of Spain; and the future Napoleon III was born. In the year 1852, Napoleon III declared himself Emperor. By the date of the work's publication, 1877, the nation was into its Third Republic (since 1870)--a government that must, at the time, have almost seemed a Romantic utopia. As the contemporary historian Jeremy Popkin notes, "only an optimist would have predicted such a future" (132)--referring to the unprecedented durability of this Third Republic. Thus, it would have been straightforward for Flaubert (not an optimist), to use his story to bracket optimism about that leftist / Romantic / utopian future off against a critique of the emptiness of old forms, of externals and substance. Félicité's religion of forms would have justified a distrust in older social forms and a reminder that they persist (or perhaps that the new rituals have taken up parrots, but have not improved the overall situation of religiosity and community in the nation). In this case, then, Church history adds a clear dimension to Flaubert's project--he has imported a known region of religious reform into his story to suggest the need for social reform, to bring reforming impulses into reality.

Emilia Pardo Bazán's "Un destripador de antaño" (1900): Filling Iconographical Lacunae as Constructing Spanish National Identity

Many examples of literature from within a Catholic religious imaginary can be found in Spain in eras other than the late nineteenth century, as well. While possessing strong regional ties as a patriot and an artist to her native Galicia (a northwestern region of Spain), for example, Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921) has achieved a renown as one of the most prolific Spanish writers, as one of the best Spanish novelists and short story writers of the nineteenth century, and as a transitional figure foreshadowing feminist

views of the twentieth century.[289] Her essay collection La cuestión palpitante (1882-83) and novelistic masterpiece Los pazos de Ulloa (1886) established her, more specifically, as Spain's major Realist-Naturalist intellectual.[290] As a Naturalist, she was inspired by well-established foreign sources[291] but yet individualized still by her own eclectic--often contradictive--nature. Fueling her eclecticism was the mixing of a conservative background or class (her parents were provincial nobles; she was conferred the title of "Countess") with the liberal education that she received (i.e., she was tutored in "male" subjects). As a result, her sympathies tended to run from reactionary to liberal and from neo-Catholic to more tolerant (that is, her inherited Carlism did not imply absolutism, censorship, or separatism but rather strong central government and certain regionalism).

Pardo Bazán is known for countering Galician provincialism with a cosmopolitan zest for novelty or the tame acceptance of a God-ordained class stratification with a sympathy for the sufferings of the humble classes; she implicitly called into the question the very ideal that she would personify concerning the sexual, professional, intellectual emancipation of women--she rarely took up these themes in her writing. In taking up the

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[289] Pardo Bazán's skill as a short story writer in particular cannot be underestimated within Spain's literary history. She is known for the abundance and high quality of her production from 1892 to her death in 1921. And it is estimated that in the whole of her career she wrote more than five hundred short stories of varying styles. Few, if any, Spanish literary figures of the time exceeded her in this capacity. My sketch of the author and her work (including these details) relies on Shaw, The Nineteenth Century 157-8; Walter T. Pattison's Emilia Pardo Bazán, Twayne's World Authors Ser. 134, (New York: Twayne, 1971); Ruth El Saffar, "Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921)," Spanish Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Source Book, ed. Linda Gould Levine, Ellen Engelson Marson, and Gloria Feiman Waldman (Westport, CT: Greenwood,1993); José García López, Historia de la literatura española (Barcelona: Vicens-Vives, 1999) 572-75; and Carolyn L. Galerstein and Kathleen McNerney, Women Writers of Spain: An Annotated Bio-Bibliographical Guide, Bibliographies and indexes in women's studies 2 (New York: Greenwood, 1986).

[290] La cuestión palpitante (1882-83) seeks to defend Realism and to raise the importance of Naturalism (in which argument the author is also prone to eclecticism). Los pazos de Ulloa (1886) claims her brand of Naturalism for a national literature in its themes, notably, of sensual reality (e.g., the psychological exploration of female desire), the relation between character and environment, and the rather unsympathetic portrayal of peasant life (Pattison, Emilia Pardo Bazán 42-50, 51-65).

[291] These sources are, particularly, the theoretical works of France's leading Naturalist Émile Zola and by Russian Naturalism (the latter in the way that it tended to retain its element of spirituality) (Pattison, Emilia Pardo Bazán 42-50).

short story later in her career, in turn, the product and re-creator of high culture (most of her novels are set in the upper class) would adapt to demands and tastes of a middle and lower class reading public of the second half of the century.[292] Thus, for example, "Un destripador de antaño" (1900), translated as "The Heart Lover,"[293] one of her best-known tales, will take the reader out of the salon and into a more quotidian Spain.

"Un destripador de antaño" has a religious dimension that again makes it difficult for today's readers to see it as modern or progressive. In addition, one female character is a brutal victimizer, the other an impassive "saint," so that feminist criticism has tended to leave this story behind as they recuperate other of the author's work.[294] The tale has thus mainly been read as a manifestation of Naturalism--coldly objective about the facts it cites, and loathe to lead its reader to any clear moral, while at least avoiding the association of violence in hereditary determinism or environment.[295] As in the Hugo case,

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[292] The implicit point here about the short story as commodity literature comes from Lou Charnon-Deutsch, "Naturalism in the Short Fiction of Emilia Pardo Bazán," Hispanic Journal 3.1 (Fall 1981): 73-85, Literature Resource Center, Thompson Gale. University of Texas Libraries, 25 January 2009 <http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/servlet/LitRC>. For common readings on "Un destripador de antaño," I rely on this work and also on Thomas Feeny, "The Child as Redeemer and Victim in Pardo Bazán's Short Fiction," Revista de estudios hispánicos 11 (1977): 425-32, Literature Resource Center. Thompson Gale. University of Texas Libraries. 25 January 2009 <http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/servlet/LitRC> and Thomas Feeny, "Illusion and the Don Juan Theme in Pardo Bazán's Cuentos de amor," Hispanic Journal 1.2 (1980): 67-71, Literature Resource Center. Thompson Gale. University of Texas Libraries. 25 January 2009 <http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/servlet/LitRC>.

[293] For the original French, I use Emilia Pardo Bazán, "Un destripador de antaño," Literatura española: una antología, ed. David William Foster, vol. 2 (New York: Garland, 1995) 278-303. For the translation, I use Edward Huberman and Elizabeth Huberman, "The Heart Lover," Great Spanish Stories, ed. Angel Flores Great Spanish Short Stories (New York: Dell, 1962) 114-38. The former will appear in subsequent references as "Pardo Bazán, 'Un destripador de antaño' (page number[s])" and the latter will appear as "Pardo Bazán, 'The Heart Lover,' trans. Huberman and Huberman: (page number[s])."

[294] Feminist approaches to her work in general have treated themes of victimization of women, men as predatory, and abused women and children among the suffering peasantry (El Saffar 383-85). Both Charnon-Deustch and Feeny (c.1980s) tend to approach the text in this manner.

[295] Flores introduces "Un destripador de antaño" to an English speaking public of the 1960s as "a sensitive apprehension of the primitive world of the Galician peasantry." Foster continues to extend this meaning to the text opening with Pardo Bazán's own brief comment on her sources for the story. As the author herself describes it, the tale is a twisted local legend (ripped from the headlines) combined with a German-gothic menacing tone that will bring one to the "zona de sombra del alma" ["shadowy zone of the soul"] (303). But of what soul does she speak specifically (the Church's? Spain's?). If Pardo Bazán's Naturalism (like

when the story's religious aspects have been commented on, the focus has generally been on the child as redeemer,[296] purportedly alluding to Christ (with little textual justification). "Un destripador de antaño," however, has a more distinct religious reference in it: St. Minia (or St. Herminia),[297] a name the author has used more than once.[298]

The story centers on a Galician peasant girl who bears a striking resemblance to the patron of the region, St. Minia, whose icon is preserved at the local church. Born to a miller and his wife, the girl Minia is orphaned while still quite young, but is taken in by her aunt and uncle, Pepona and Juan Ramón, who also inherit the family mill. As a charity case, Minia is otherwise abused: given tasks of hard labor (while her cousins are encouraged in more skillful occupations or allowed to be idle), made to sleep on the floor like an animal, and even serve as the family's scapegoat--beaten when fortunes at the mill turn. Despite the abuse, Minia accepts her situation as one would a religious test or burden, that is, with the kind of silent suffering and graceful impassivity that would be exemplary of her saint. Not of the same temperament in her own suffering, Pepona will stop at nothing to find the means to prevent eviction and bankruptcy, even if those means are immoral.

Russian Naturalism) was known for injecting a sense of the spiritual into a more traditionally secularized aesthetic, why have critics not looked at this work in its potential spiritual-religious dimension and, moreover, its more menacing spiritual dimension (as I will do further below)?

[296] In his "The Child as Redeemer and Victim," Feeny concludes that the only figure consistently exempt from Pardo Bazán's typical pessimistic view is the child. Adults otherwise are seen as immoral, brutal, or themselves suffering from disease or injustice (432).

[297] The saint's name "Minia" reappears in Pardo Bazán's religious novel La Quimera (1905), the story of lost artist who seeks his life's solution with help from three women. Here Minia is the comforting and serene aid who brings him back to religious community and religious truths. The reference to the saint in this work--as well as to other saints referenced--warrants further investigation.

[298] Kathy Bacon argues for the relevance of the life of the fourth-century martyr St. Catherine of Alexandria in the reading of Pardo Bazán's novel Dulce Dueño (1911). While Bacon sets a modern precedent for this kind of approach to Pardo Bazán, she does not consider the saint's material as impacting a popular audience of a particular socio-historical moment (e.g., the pertinence of St. Minia's local image to contemporaneous Spain as I unfold it here).

Pepona is, however, much more nuanced in the story, more than as just an abuser. She fades in and out of coherency about how to handle the situation of the family's threatened ruin. At first she hatches the plan of exploiting the village's St. Minia church by robbing the poor box (which she will not act on). Then, she will attempt to cajole the landlord into forgiving the rent (an effort which comes to nothing). And, finally, she will be enlightened by the possibility of exploiting further the girl made in the saint's image--a move of heartlessness, but also desperation. Approaching a local apothecary, Don Custodio, who, it is rumored, makes his curatives with maidens' hearts, she will propose to sell him the heart of Minia--providing the additional service of delivering the prized commodity conveniently separated from its body. While not a murderer, Don Custodio has long since acted as profiteer, taking the advice of the local canon of letting rumors (of sorcery) fly among the ignorant village folk so as to be able to charge more for his product. But before he is able to stop the unthinkable result, he will find Minia slaughtered on the road. While Pepona will be hanged and Juan Ramon imprisoned for the crime, Don Custodio--looking even more culpable than before within that same rumor--will not himself however become subject to the retribution of the village mob. As a member of an educated class, he is responsible for the murder because of the way he exploits local superstition, but he is not legally culpable for it.

Executed with stylistic economy and a rapid crescendo, the author's tale will waste no time in introducing to the reader what will be a key religious image that can lead to this tale's extra dimension. In the very first narrative scene sequence, she will unfold a highly sentimentalized and vividly painted Galician countryside, green-hued,

and that comes complete with yet another vision or that of the girl called Minia:

> El complemento del asunto--gentil, lleno de poesía, digno de que lo fijase un artista genial en algún cuadro idílico . . . Minia encarnaba el tipo de la pastora: armonizaba con el fondo. En la aldea la llamaba roxa, pero en sentido de rubia, pues tenía el pelo del color del cerro que a veces hilaba, de un rubio pálido, lacio, que, a manera de vajo reflejo lumínico, rodeaba la carita, aldo tostado por el sol, oval y descolorida, donde sólo brillaban los ojos con un toque celeste, como el azul que a veces se entrevé al través de las brumas del montañes celaje. Minia cubría sus carnes con un refrajo colorado, desteñido ya por el uso; recia camisa de estopa velaba su seno, mal desarollado aún; iba descalza y el pelito lo llevaba envedijado y revuelto y a veces mezclado--sin asomo de ofeliana coquetería--con briznas de paja o tallos de los que segaba para la vaca en los linderos de las heredades. (Pardo Bazán, "Un destripador de antaño" 279)
>
> [A strange child, full of poetry, worthy of an idyllic painting by some congenial artist, Minia was the very model of a shepherdess in that she harmonized with the background. In the village, they called her blonde since her hair was the color of the flax she used to spin. It was a pale and faded blonde which, like a wavering glow of light, surrounded her face, oval and sunburned, where only her eyes shone with a sky-blue light, like the blue that sometimes shines through the mists of the mountain clouds. Minia was dressed in a reddish skirt faded and worn; a coarse cloth shift hid her breasts, still scarcely formed. She was barefoot, her short hair was tangled and unkempt, and at times mixed with blades of straw or shoots of grass she has picked up for the cow on the edge of the pastureland. {Pardo Bazán, "The Heart Lover," trans. Huberman and Huberman: 115-16)}]

Posing the maiden thus, almost artificially serene, the passage will end by drawing the connection that, she explains, was on the minds of the villagers and that certainly would have been on the minds of her Catholic readers (particularly Galicia-Catholics), even before articulated more directly in the narrative: that this Minia was made in the very image and likeness of the Galician patron saint, well-known as a female virgin-martyr.

In this passage, Pardo Bazán begins to prepare the reader for the likeness to be drawn out, in a re-use and a meaningful distortion of the trappings of Minia's image as a saint in popular memory and experience, and as a predictor of the nation's fate--with her martyrdom prefiguring that of the nation. The author is at pains to make this reference explicit by using the saint's first name. And if any reader would still doubt her intention,

the author reproduces a natural world that would have been re-affirming, announcing the presence of the holy figure in the sketch by its mere coloring. That is, the green of the hills, the gold of her hair, and the faded red of her skirt together function as Catholic symbols recalling, respectively, (from green) the hope, (from gold) the joy of being saved and, at the same time, (from red, albeit faded red) the ultimate gesture of sacrifice or martyrdom in the cause of Christ or His religion--all references also colors common in the Catholic liturgy or public worship service, signifying respectively hope, grace, and sacrifice. In wearing red, even a faded red, she symbolizes the martyr, From this point forward and in the next scene sequence specifically, the author will continue to unfold the saint in traditional terms, as a physical object of worship. Her version of the saint and her physical detail are the starting point for a Catholic who already knows the history to encounter a less than trustworthy identification, however--the author is rewriting the inherited legend.

As a local cult figure for Galician-Catholics, both then and now, St. Minia is known as an adolescent Christian convert persecuted in fourth-century Rome, possibly thrown to the lions.[299] But the key to her devotional story in fact does not lie with these details--the few ones known--of her life. The more famous elements of her story are her remains and the genuine, contemporaneous popular history of how she came to be the

[299] Standard source information on the saint is relatively scarce. (And it is not without cause then that a warning from Pardo Bazán of the scarcity of material available on the saint appears in the original text itself--although the author certainly had other reasons for making the comment [see Pardo Bazán, "Un destripador de antaño" 280; Pardo Bazán, "The Heart Lover," trans. Huberman and Huberman: 116]). As a result, I have had to rely on material appearing on various Galician cultural and tourist websites: "Brión," Comarca de Santiago, 25 January 2009 <http://www.comarcasantiago.com/frame.php?op=3>; "O culto a Santa Minia, nacido a partir da devoción dun particular, congrega cada ano a milleiros de devotos." 27 septiembre 2004, Culturagalega.org, Consello da Cultura Galega, 25 January 2009 <http://www.culturagalega.org/noticia.php?id=5045>; Clodio González Pérez, "Santa Minia de Brión," El Correo Gallego 9 septiembre 2008, 25 January 2009 <http://www.elcorreogallego.es/hemeroteca-web/ecg/santa-minia-brion/idEdicion-2008-09-27/idNoticia-346914/>; "El Santuario de Santa Minia (Brión)," Trisquel: Archivos del Patrimonio Histórico Gallego, ed. Julio Fernández Pintos, 2001, 25 January 2009 <http://usuarios.lycos.es/jufp/santaminia_Brion.html>; Santuario de Santa Minia de Brión, 25 January 2009 <http://www.santaminia.org/>.

saint of the region. Her story is told typically told from the very moment that her bodily remains were exhumed in 1804 under the sanction of Pope Pius VII (1740-1823). Not bound for any particular place of public worship as yet, the remains of the saint were at first passed through the hands of certain private owners. In that time, she would, for example, find overseas residence in the private oratory of a rich local merchant in Cádiz, Andalusia, Spain, and, after the merchant's death, be inherited by the man who had served him, Luis Tobío. Out of devotional or other business motives (he would hold the legal rights to the relic), Tobío would transport her to his native Galicia.

Once arrived there in 1848, the local church, at Tobío's request, would begin a campaign to establish the saint's local following in the region. And as the numbers of her followers would grow (as would legends about her miraculous works, associated with Spain; see below), the church gave permission to construct a new resting place, a chapel and later a larger sanctuary, in the Galician municipal district and parish of Brión (although actually in Pedrouzos); the place name was eventually added to her title as "Santa Minia de Brión." It was there that Minia would at last lie revealed to her public. And her church would be positioned as a kind of gateway to the famous pilgrimage along the "Camino de Santiago" ["Way of St. James"], that is, the path leading the cathedral in which St. James the Apostle is reputedly buried, in Santiago de Compostela. Entering St. Minia's church, a local devout or pilgrim, then, would find the local icon--a waxen statue of an adolescent girl dressed in Roman tunic--enclosed in a glass urn. The head of the statue contained a vial of blood, reputedly the saint's own, as the site's proof of authenticity.[300] Now presented in this setting, the saint has not moved from the region,

[300] Like St. Rita's real corpse, St. Minia's likeness remain on physical display. They are both in this sense "show saints." For a glimpse of Minia, see the initial webpages of Santuario de Santa Minia de Brión (<http://www.santaminia.org/>).

lying there even today amidst an unfinished sanctuary and a great many of the devout, who gather particularly on September 27th, her feast day.

If a Catholic of the region would have been familiar with this cultural history that Pardo Bazán retells within her narrative (following the scene cited above), the resulting story seems curious, until the retold story's detail are examine more closely, in relation to the familiar saint's material. Three moments tend to stand out as clear alterations from the popular story. First, as Pardo Bazán relates it, the rich merchant or first possessor of the saint's remains in Cádiz becomes a Roman cardinal (and now with no mention of the city). Thereafter, when describing the specifics of the icon itself the author again takes artistic license when she relates that, rather than a vial of blood, a single cranial bone may be found embedded in the head of the waxen statue. And, later still, she renames the saint, using with the village name of her own saintly Minia "St. Minia of Tornelos." Finally, in a slightly different gesture, she add to the scene the colors of her opening sketch, reproducing its green, red, and gold in the green of the statue's tunic, the red of her pillow and of her blood form her cut throat (the latter a foreshadowing), and the gold (or rather blond) of her hair. Here the narrative draws an analogy between the historical saint and a local St. Minia, only to deconstruct the icon it has constructed.

The reconstruction adds one other significant element to the original source saint's relatively scanty iconographic attributes. The author adds to her story a local superstition, the story of another well-known Galician: the "destripador" ["ripper"], who cut throats or, quite literally, ripped out hearts of young virgins--all details introduced roughly a third of the way through the tale, after the saint's icon is introduced. As this cutthroat is associated with the local icon, the effect is jarring, as the secular intrudes on the sacred, two kinds of local legend coming together. With this gesture, the religious images that at first seemed serene will progressively become more foreboding, even gruesome. In the

final scene, namely, where the apothecary finds the remains of the author's St. Minia, the liturgical colors are reproduced, but with red at its full intensity, no longer faded. At this moment, the sun's rays illuminate her cut throat and the bloody chest of the corpse, and the blood stains the grass around her. The story now strangely recalls in physical terms the brutality apparent in saint's icon, transforming the iconographic story into a real fate.

This parallelism points to discrete religious critiques. The two legends are brought together, so that the two spare tales supplement each other's details, and the people are willing or tempted to believe in her. In this juxtaposition, the author comments on the essential randomness of saint's worship and on the collective cult creations that many local saints are. She works differently than does Galdós, however, because she ultimately points to the raw commercialism of saints and martyrs--the specific alignment of church and bourgeois interests. In this juxtaposition, then, the author speaks directly to the issue of collective cultural-historical revisionism, exercised by parishioners and their church. They imported the icon, they built the sanctuary, and they created or at least reinforced the myths and legends surrounding the saint and their town. The priest in the narrative profits from the pilgrims and the devout in the village, just as a real parish on the road to Santiago would have. And the tale's two male deceivers--the "Canon of the Metropolitan church" as the enlightened manipulator who advises and collaborates with the apothecary--profit from the lore that they have in part built up around them. Readers of the era would have seen how a part of Galicia was establishing a religious and possibly commercial identity, as shown in Tobío's St. Minia--a saint's remains begins the commodification of devotions, as a "national saint" is declared to secure the region's new identity.

A critique of reconstructed collective beliefs thus converges with a more explicit socio-political critique. In terms of literary history, the Generation of 1898 had as a

hallmark theme concerns about identity; Pardo Bazán belongs to a younger generation, but she, too, takes up these concerns with her St. Minia. She specifically asks her readers to recall an even more over-determined familiar historical reference to St. Minia and Spain. A well-known legend built up around the saint concerns the outcome of the Spanish War of Independence (1808), Spain's war against French occupation.[301] In the legend, it was St. Minia who aided in the successful outcome of the conflict, with the adolescent standing up against Napoleon's re-creation of the Roman Empire. As a gesture of gratitude, the natives of Galicia would import her remains to honor them.[302]

The historical saint as a figure of Spain's history connects a figure from fiction with Spain itself--a saint whose story is sketchy, used to celebrate a somewhat ambiguous historical cause. Pardo Bazán was writing, during the post-Restoration politics of "turno pacífico" (a rather contrived passage of power from right to left and back again), when Spain's culture and politics looked equally as rooted in imported ideologies, opportunism, and conflicting agendas as her saint did. Commercial interests converge with possible liberalism or liberal reform and regionalism, over the blood of individuals--the ground of a nation with a complex and perhaps even apocryphal identity, damning many individual Minias at the hands of upper class oppressors-by-proxy.

The Reality of the Catholic Imaginary

The above case studies posit three large archives of knowledge as straightforwardly accessible to authors and readers sharing a Catholic imaginary. Specifically, they suggest a common repertoire of symbols and icons, theological issues

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[301] For a brief review of this history, see P. E. Russell, Spain 152-56. For more depth and detail, see Payne, "The War of Independence and Liberalism," A History of Spain and Portugal 415-452 and Raymond Carr, "The Crisis of the Ancien Regime, 1808-14," Spain, 1808-1975, Oxford History of Modern Europe (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) 79-119.

[302] "O culto a Santa Minia," culturagalega.org par. 5.

comprising developments in church (and often state) history, and familiar stories (e.g., local saints' legends and miracles). As they do so, they argue for the necessity of reading texts in full light of these common cultural-religious histories or specific local issues and practices--and not in contexts of specialized knowledge.

As common sources of this knowledge, schools of the era--at certain moments, run by religious orders--likely taught the story of such figures as St. Paul as often as they did, for example, Spain's Reconquest or War of Independence. And even the latter were likely not only taught as moments of history, but also as examples of God's deliverance through the intercession of the saints. Thus, one must keep in mind how very accessible these archives of the religious imaginary were in societies such as nineteenth-century Spain and France, immersed or at pains to emerge from the dominions of Catholic institution supported by less-than-progressive governments.

While authors of the period may have recognized the advantage in tapping into these archives, they may not have gone so far as Galdós in layering multiple religious meanings for multiple readerships into their texts. But they nevertheless realized, as did Galdós, that narrative stories might be told straightforwardly or be amplified by recourse to this common cultural capital, be it to create a text for the devout or to take a stance as less conservative or more liberal in the values they portrayed.

Despite, then, the kind of universalism that tends to define "great works" today--pushing Realist works in particular away from the real or more authentic inspirations by which they were conceived--one must reconsider the time-and-place-bound religious situations and debates that characterizes these works as relevant and valuable to specific contexts, and then see how they can be read as more appropriately modern for their own times.

Conclusion:

The Religious Imaginary as a Modern Approach to Cultural Studies

One of the goals of this project has been to argue that today's critics and scholars might profitably take more nuanced approaches to the implications of religion as an element of cultural capital for literary production and art. Having thus acknowledged some of the religious archives of Catholic cultures of nineteenth-century Europe, I may begin to come to larger conclusions concerning, for example, how traditional lines of literary history might be reconsidered in light of such re-evaluations.

As other national literary histories are structured under rubrics like Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Modernism and the like, those of France and Spain have tended to overlook or oversimplify relationships bridging these eras, most particularly, cultural Catholicism. Moreover, in the era of nascent modern literature, critics have generally preferred to set secular culture over and against religious culture. For these reasons, among others, the religiously themed works that I analyzed above have traditionally been read as conservative and retrogressive. The ways in which their authors address their publics (through religious thematics, church history, theological issues, etc.) have not immediately seemed to these critics to be the rhetoric or device of artistic experiment or innovation.

Yet, as I have argued, religious culture is too easily equated with conservative culture. And, within the immediacy of its original historical moment, it can be shown to

serve an artist otherwise. Recontextualizing these works, I have thus been able to re-read them as both religious and as more modernizing social commentaries (albeit not in texts of the more familiar and privileged aesthetic of Modernism). By doing so, I have argued for redefining what criticism has traditionally identified as "modern." That is, the term might better comprise a set of socio-critical imperatives, rather than stylistic markers--thus to assess issues associated with modernization separately from the style in which those issues are presented.

After all, if the substance and address of these works are examined as separate from the package in which they come, the purportedly more conservative texts that I have presented here would all appear rather modern, even by more conventional standards. Looking more closely at their handling of church materials, one may discover how they often offer readings far outside the church's own contemporaneous norms, even though those readings originate in a religious imaginary shared with that church. Their originality and progressiveness lies in what strategies their authors take in using these materials, so deeply ingrained in audiences' lives and literacies, in order to engage and influence them.

Religious references in Hugo's masterpiece Les Misérables are often misread, if not ignored, thus obscuring how it co-opted figural Catholic-Christian reference points for social causes. One must recognize that Valjean may not in fact represent Christ, but rather the convert St. Paul, an identification that gives Valjean's protection of marginalized cohorts additional resonance as a formation of a new kind of community or the foundation of a new Church. In this light, the suicide of his nemesis Javert also acquires a motivation deeper than the fear of losing his job: he acts out of a crisis of faith and inability to have the courage to either openly join that Church or resist it.

Seen through a cultural-historical lens, Hugo's vision of a Church community, judged by affinity and not by birth, resonates with a society experimenting with socialism and worker's rights. And his image of a repentant criminal as its organizer demonstrates for a generally bourgeois readership an alternate image of social justice, introducing the power of the state as the lower classes would see it. The letter of the law, the status quo, for this class consistently fails to meet its needs, thus driving it to live in want and fear of authority. Through the religious figuration, Hugo may also be calling France to recognize its own travels down a road to Damascus (marked by repeated regime changes) and its identity as a nation thus still needing to be converted.

Works such as Flaubert's "Un Coeur simple" have similarly been underestimated by critics unfamiliar with or unwilling to recognize its representations of traditional church life--the Catholic theology surrounding the liturgy, in this case--as a source for modern discussion and critique. Vice seems to readers today as somehow more modern, while representations of religious inspiration seems to point backwards in time (although, not necessarily for readers of the time). Thus, critics have preferred to read the rather amiable, older, and relatively modest protagonist of this tale, Félicité, as a timeless type--rather than as a realistic portrait offered in a Realist work (and as a woman who is every bit the flawed reader that Madame Bovary is, albeit with considerably fewer resources with which she can self-delude). While she may indeed, as critics claim, depict self-sacrifice, unconditional love, and humility (not dissimilar to the ways Misericordia's Benina has been read as depicting self-sacrifice and charity), the forms that those "virtues" take in her life point inevitably to the church's failure in educating her and to then-current claims that the lower class that she represents has been ill-served.

Flaubert's message to the reticent bourgeois of 1870s France (such as he himself was suspected of being), as I read it, rings clear. His Félicité is indeed delusional. But

how should she be otherwise, given the state of her religious and civil education? When she thus interprets a parrot as the Holy Spirit, her literalist position neither portrays her as a pious woman nor as a blasphemer. She is simply engaged wrongly with the cause of religion and unaided by a France that has ignored her.

In Misericordia, Galdós uses many more Catholic elements than these other texts, but here, too, he aligns his own varied religious discourses with necessary social reform issues. A typical reading of Misericordia is that it documents how its author's own ageing or disillusionment caused him to slip into a reactionary stance--turning away from earlier critiques or revisionist affinities. (Similar assertions have been made for Flaubert's "Un Coeur simple, " although in this case the author would be showing a more characteristic reticence.) My contention about the text runs precisely contrary to this reading: I believe that Galdós largely maintains his socio-critical position, only now with a new voice: he seeks to appeal to new audiences and thus has chosen different styles and materials to do so. If he is disillusioned, it is with the bourgeoisie as failed national care-takers, abusing workers, like Benina, who sustain them.

This reading may be extended, as I have shown, by reconsidering Galdós' casting and recasting of marginalized types as non-traditional saints and martyrs, who are used by the bourgeoisie and the Church. In this way, the author points not to the need for religion or piety in his day, but to the existing gaps between piety and national reform, according to the letter and the spirit of church and state law. Here, Galdós might look a little more leftist and at slightly earlier moments than literary history would normally assume. That is, he is suspected of having socialist leanings at later moments in his life, but here he already identifies issues critical to socialist strategies of political analysis, if not to party politics themselves.

Pardo Bazán's "Un destripador de antaño" is an example of how critical misreadings may arise when scholars ignore the implications of specific religious symbols, icons, in this case, within a local culture's religious imaginary. This text is more than an ethical-moral fable about the church or an exercise in the Naturalist style, reusing peasant folklore. Rather, it has relevance to problems of church and state. Particularly when the author begins to alter the historical "St. Minia of Brión," for example, as "St. Minia of Tornelos," the text becomes more recognizably socio-critical. That is, Pardo Bazán's St. Minia (not unlike Galdós's Sts. Rita and Romuald) comments on the stagnating relationship of the Church, as in the people, with its saints. The figure also alludes to a past face-changing victory for Spain that nevertheless left within the nation transplanted elements, resisting resolution. Here Spain's turn-of-the-century Feminist, with suspected conservative and churchy skeletons in her closet, nevertheless makes more progressive appeals to her Catholic-Galician public. She addresses concerns of national identity (re-)creation, very relevant to her readership's present day.

Bridging from these works to the twentieth century, others from Catholic Europe (namely, Spain) might be taken up as tying religious thematics and discourse to national concerns in exemplary ways.

Miguel de Unamuno's San Manuel Bueno, mártir (1933), for instance, is a misunderstood masterpiece that draws heavily on Spain's Catholic imaginary. The key to the critique in this work is not its commonly regarded atheism or anticlericalism (the characters Emmanuel, Lazarus, Angela--all common Christian names--do not necessarily behave as the church would have them). As I read it, Unamuno in fact borrows from the Catholic culture of two Carmelite nuns with diverse theologies: St. Teresa of Ávila, who lived as a model Catholic, and St. Theresa of Lisieux, who wrote a popular "night of the soul" narrative expressing her spiritual doubts. The author here would use the popularity

of the latter figure and her work to his advantage, that is, to reflect national doubt about the Catholic church in Spain.

As a reflection on the opening years of the Civil War, Ramón J. Sender's Réquiem por un campesino español (1953, 1960) takes up yet another salient topic for Spain of the period. The traditional reading of the work focuses on denouncing the Catholic church and the Franco regime as mutually implicated. Yet, pointing to the work's iconographical strategy may expand upon this critique. That is, through its priest Mosén Millán, a right-wing collaborator, Sender re-uses St. Millán, the patron and founder of Spain, transforming and deconstructing the original saint's iconography. In this way, Catholic Spain's own patron saint--no longer serving the kind of rescue or salvation that it once had--may thus accuse and critique the present model, Spain herself.

In closing, I return again to the question posed by Octavio Paz in his reading of Mexico's Sor Juana. Recall that Paz took up the case of this figure, to point to the particular situation of a rebellious nun whose return to the church at the end of her life appeared conservative. But, as the author suggests, that conservatism might have been forced upon her as a woman with no other options in the era. In making that connection, Paz sets literature into the context of larger issues, questioning traditional modes for modeling and understanding modernization as largely insufficient for explicating choices like Sor Juana's. He argues overall for a corrective interpretation of progressive literary and cultural politics that allows cultural Catholicism to have critical potential.

Perhaps equally as important, he also seems to imply that literary scholars and historians of the twentieth century may need to see beyond (their own) vilification of the Catholicism as the historical enemy of progress and to begin to look at it more objectively as a potential source for public discourse.

In making my own further inquires, I have found Catholicism to be a much more contemporary cultural presence within a discussion of modernization. And the upshot of this revaluation for cultural and literary histories of Catholic societies, such as France, Spain, and Mexico, is large. As these nations modernized while maintaining a majority demographic of Catholics, they struggled with such issues of gender, class, region, and power differently than their Protestant neighbors and so adapted their national messages to suit their audience, using discourses from their own cultural landscapes.

Once acknowledged, this cultural-historical circumstance tends to validate looking further at works of these cultures such as those that I have discussed here. These are works that co-opt religious discourses or conceptualize their arguments within more traditional frames, but yet for the purpose of making social and political commentaries or critiques. These critiques, while nuanced, were quite likely readily understood and likely contemplated by many readers--particularly, those who fell outside the avant-garde and who were not opposed to modernization but who identified more with conservative traditions. Works with these features, I believe, may in fact comprise a more paradigmatic model for literature of the period.

Engaging the religious imaginary of various sites thus seems critical to understanding how culture and religion, especially national projects, intervene in each other. As a result, genre categories or "-isms" may begin to take on different faces, given that discourses based in the religious imaginary seem to globally serve artistic movements. And, moreover, as intimated just above, today's commonly accepted views of who is conservative and who is liberal or even more leftist (and thus who is more canonical or representative) may even begin to shift.

In short, the Catholic church played a large part in many nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Western European cultures. Yet these cultures have provided

only initial case studies, and I would underscore that any nation marked by religion will have similar archives--similar reserves of signs, issues, and stories that can be used either within or outside of the space of religion itself. To miss this point has implications for reading a literature perhaps most characteristic of any religious culture and society. By so doing, critics and scholars will pass over national exemplars of an entire domain of public speech and persuasion--some more conservative, some more progressive--but a great number of which certainly have yet to be uncovered.

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VITA

Jennifer Marie Powers was born in New York City, New York, to Irish and Italian parents. She holds a B.A. both in English Literature and Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures (French and Spanish) as a dual degree from Kenyon College (where she notably received the highest award of "distinction" on her senior thesis). Her M.A., from the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), is in French Literature with a focus on the nineteenth-century novel. Her Ph.D., also from UT Austin, is structured as part of the Ad Hoc Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program, designed to address culture and literature of Western Catholic nations. She has taught French and Spanish language at UT Austin and, more recently, Spanish language with a Hispanic culture / literature component at the University of California, San Diego. Currently, she is working on separate short studies exploring popularized Catholic-Carmelite theology and the iconography of a patron saint of Spain, respectively, in two Spanish novels from the years surrounding the nation's Civil War. She resides in San Diego with her husband, in a small house near the ocean.

Permanent address: jmpowers@alumni.utexas.net

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